

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BASEBALL IN
VENEZUELA

by

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Stakeholder Perceptions of the Social and Economic Impact of Baseball in Venezuela

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the hardworking Venezuelan baseball professionals and athletes, without whom I would not have been able to write this thesis. Hopefully their efforts on the field and in training inspire other young Venezuelans to follow in their footsteps.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Fédération Internationale de Football Association	FIFA
United States Dollar	USD
Major League Baseball	MLB
Minor League Baseball.....	MiLB
National Basketball Association.....	NBA
United Kingdom	UK
National Hockey League	NHL
National Football League	NFL
Major League Soccer.....	MLS
National Collegiate Athletic Association.....	NCAA
United States.....	U.S.
Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries	OPEC

ABSTRACT

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BASEBALL IN VENEZUELA

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This study was designed to understand how baseball affects the daily life of Venezuelans, specifically in a social and economic way. In order to execute this study, interviews were conducted with four adults who are highly involved in the baseball community of Venezuela. Interviews were conducted via Skype in either English or Spanish, in whichever language the participant was most comfortable. Questions were asked of the study participants to understand their involvement with baseball, their description of baseball in Venezuela, how baseball affects their interactions with others, and how baseball affects the economy. Results indicated that baseball has become a daily part of social life. However, economically, baseball only affects those in the private sector or the government. The results also indicated that baseball teaches youth valuable life lessons and morals as well as how to be healthy and fit. While the sample size was small, this study introduces the positives and negatives of baseball in Venezuela. Further research can be conducted with a larger sample or a trip to Venezuela to see first-hand how the public interacts with the sport.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

This study is meant to examine how sport, specifically baseball, has affected the Venezuelan community from a social and economic standpoint. Stadiums, for instance, are one of the most controversial aspects of sport because of the costs associated with building, operating, and renovating large facilities. Arguments have also been made by sports critics that youth sport leads to more violent and aggressive children. While sport is a costly endeavor for cities and communities, it can also provide opportunities for the community to come together. Sport has the potential to provide opportunities for children to learn life lessons about teamwork, communication, dedication, and how to live healthy lifestyles through exercise and diet. Additionally, cities who host sport are often benefited by philanthropy efforts by the teams. Athletes will make community appearances, build playgrounds, and sponsor community fundraisers. All of these activities directly impact the cities in a positive manner.

Many people also view sport as a universal unifier. Countries from all over the globe come together every four years to participate in events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup. While swimming, soccer, and basketball are some of the most participated in sports around the world, other sports such as baseball, softball, field hockey and volleyball are gaining popularity. Baseball and softball saw a spike in participation around the world before they were cut from the Olympic Games. Baseball sees a strong following in Latin and Central America, areas known to have their own baseball championships between

many different countries. Besides the United States, the best baseball athletes come from the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and Panama – a shocking statistic due to the popularity of soccer in that region (Manuel, 2005).

Overview of the Study

To give this study context, the literature review, in Chapter Two, focuses on documented positive and negative impacts of sport in a community. Sport has many elements that are not included in the scope of this study, but the key and most important aspects of sport in the community are. The most important key elements of sport, as listed in the literature, are the economic and social implications of sponsoring sport. These elements of sport have helped shape how sport is viewed amongst community members and a variety of other stakeholders within specific contexts. A brief recent history of Venezuela and how baseball became the national sport in Venezuela has also been included in the chapter. Chapter Three describes the methodology employed in the study. A discussion of the results of the qualitative interviews comprises Chapter Four. Chapter Five concludes the study with a summary, discussion, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Negative Impact of Sport

Two of the most significant perceived negative impacts of sport focus on financial and social components associated with hosting sport teams and hallmark events. Some factors include costs associated with building and maintaining new facilities, traffic issues, crime, and resident displacement. It is important to understand the negative aspects because, at times, they can outweigh the perceived positive. Understanding the negative impacts also allows organizations and communities to address their concerns ahead of time.

Stadiums are costly endeavors for cities and countries. Smaller cities may have difficulty finding the ability to fund one. In larger cities such as New York and Washington DC, when the team asks for a new stadium, local government is able to raise tourism taxes on hotel rooms and rental cars to help shift some of the cost burden from its citizens.

Impact in South Africa

South Africa hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the first hallmark event the country hosted. Its citizens believed in the 'narrative of 2010,' or the hope for a better tomorrow in their country (Ngonyama, 2010). This narrative portrayed beautiful beaches, international sport competitions, and increased tourism as a result of exposure from the FIFA World Cup. The country wanted to use the event as many other host cities had to rebrand themselves (du Plessis & Maennig, 2011). South Africa was plagued by the stigma of the Apartheid era and the cruelties its black citizens endured. The country wanted to portray its advancements,

community unity, and ability to be a tourist destination for international travelers. While the immediate and short term effects included an increase in tourism to the country, it did not see the growth it hoped for over time (Ngonyama, 2010).

South Africa is also dealing with a number of issues brought to light by activists fighting for the rights of the poor black citizens. David Masondo, as cited in Ngonyama (2010), Chairperson of the Young Communist League states, “The past ten years of economic growth have resulted in neither a ‘trickle down’ effect, nor the creation of decent work with a living wage for the mostly black working poor” (p. 170). While the majority of the country was expecting to see a large return, which never came, black South Africans knew the trickle down approach would not benefit the “callous disregard for the poor in the build up to 2010 in Durban was further evidenced during the 2010 FIFA Preliminary Draw in November 2007. Street children were given ‘free lodging and housing’ at the overcrowded Westville Prison, thus exposing them to violent attacks, including rape and possible infection with HIV” (Ngonyama, 2010, pg. 174). These conditions, further created by evictions due to stadium construction, increased the likelihood for disease outbreak in the country close to the start of the FIFA World Cup. The government’s solution to avoid disease in the city was to move the “camps” outside of the cities and into county lands.

After the initial euphoria of the bid wore off, citizens began to realize the economic impacts of the event. The new stadium in Durban stadium cost 314M USD. The community believed the funds could be better used to help community members living in substandard conditions in Durban and the province of KwaZulu-Natal (Ngonyama, 2010). Advocates for the poor emphasized that the annual cost of stadium upkeep was equivalent to 90,000 low cost houses a year (Ngonyama, 2010). Those living in substandard conditions would not see the

improved economic and emotional impacts the larger cities expected to see. Their villages were often too far for them to even travel to the event and experience the atmosphere.

As time went on, economic sustainability became a significant issue; international tourist numbers began to drop, thus eliminating any hope by South Africans that the FIFA World Cup had put them on the map as a desirable tourist destination. This was a particularly difficult realization considering the financial investment made to host the event. Today, most of the stadiums sit idle, hoping for a use (du Plessis & Maennig, 2011). In fact, the Cape Town government is considering tearing down the stadium, as was done with the baseball stadium in Beijing after the Olympics, because the cost to operate it is greater than revenues generated.

Cities Struggling with Sport

Tampa, Florida is the home to three major sports teams: baseball's Tampa Bay Rays, football's Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and hockey's Tampa Bay Lightning. After thirteen years in Tampa, the Rays were looking to move, at the same time, the Lightning were doing the same after only eight years in the city (Berthiaume, 2011). By that time, the Rays had three winning seasons, including a trip to the World Series; but their success had not improved ticket sales and attendance at Tropicana Field. From 2010, a year after the World Series, to the following season, they dropped an average of 5,000 fans per game (Berthiaume, 2011). Despite their continued success on the field, attendance remains steady at Tropicana Field, approximately 25,000 less than the average game at Fenway Park in Boston. Ownership now says they are willing to try to make it work in Tampa to meet the needs of the consumer, but skeptics think their willingness to work with the city is due to their lease at Tropicana Field through 2027 ("Sternberg," 2013). The MLB is pushing for the Rays to leave Tampa and move to a market that would increase ticket sales and revenues for the franchise. City planners have also cited downtown Tampa

traffic as a deterrent for baseball fans (Berthiaume, 2011). Public transportation is not as common in Tampa as it is in a larger city such as New York; and Tampa does not have the infrastructure to handle both rush hour traffic and game traffic.

Another city struggling, despite its sporting successes, is Atlanta, Georgia. The city hosted the 1996 Summer Olympics and has been able to reuse many of the facilities as dorms at Georgia Tech and the home field for the MLB's Atlanta Braves (now known as Turner Field). Despite successes in the hallmark event as well as college and professional sport markets such as baseball and football, Atlanta struggled to keep its hockey team operational after the lockout. In eleven seasons in Atlanta, the Thrashers only made the playoffs once and were unable to secure a win ("Thrashers," 2011). As a niche sport, hockey already struggles to operate in the black in many of the southern states, but continuous poor showings did not help to make Atlanta a hockey city. Atlanta had already lost a hockey team in 1980 to Calgary and when the financial situation showed a repeat was bound to happen, the city did not argue ("Thrashers," 2011). Despite sharing Philips Arena with the Atlanta Hawks, an NBA team, the Thrashers were not bringing in enough revenue to justify continuing the sport in the city. The city's mayor appeared disappointed that in a successful sporting city, such as Atlanta, the NHL could not compete. However, statistics show sports fans in Atlanta were more interested in the Ohio State scandal and other college football news than the news of their NHL team leaving for Winnipeg ("Thrashers," 2011).

Social Concerns for Hosting Sport and Hallmark Events

Social issues are always a concern when cities win bids for hallmark events. Governing bodies want cities to hide anything that can be viewed through a negative lens so the media can only portray what it sees – a clean and put together event. Often, low-income residents are

forced out of their homes and into government housing to make room for new stadiums. Oftentimes, this housing is substandard. In 2012, it was expected that 170,000 people would be evicted from their homes to make room for one of the FIFA stadiums in Brazil (Zibechei, 2012). These evictions were the result of government attempts to clean up host cities and make room for massive stadiums to be constructed. Other evictions were made for the expansion of highways, roadways and the airport (Zibechei, 2012). It is important to note that the need for improved infrastructure existed long before the World Cup bid was granted to Brazil, but it was not acted on until the country won the bid.

During the 2010 FIFA World Cup, South African citizens and FIFA wanted issues related to human trafficking and prostitution addressed. Activists argued that the public should question governments about policies and procedures that are being put in place to prevent human trafficking during an event (Ngonyama, 2010). FIFA representatives were also worried about the close proximity of prostitutes to the stadiums and the negative image that would result and thus tainting the event. Human trafficking and prostitution are not issues FIFA wants associated with their brand and events. Countries such as South Africa often deal with these issues because of the drastic socio-economic differences that exist between citizens.

Positive Impact of Sport

Sporting culture is known for its influence on children through their experience with sport. Many parents expect their children to learn the importance of teamwork and work ethic. However, research shows children are learning more than expected. Lee, Cornwell, and Babiak (2013) discuss the healthy lifestyle choices that children and adults who play sports eventually adopt. This research indicates athletes have greater health literacy, thus helping them to understand the importance of diet and regular exercise. Athletes also tend to perform at higher

levels in academic settings and possess higher levels of self-esteem in relation to body image and self-identification than non-athletes. Sport can be used for poverty reduction, education expansion, environmental sustainability, and gender equality (Lee, Cornwell, & Babiak, 2013). These social constructs can be broken down by sport because each athlete, in theory, is given an equal opportunity on the playing field to prove themselves as an athlete and a positive contributor to society. Similarly, children of all sizes, races, and backgrounds are given the opportunity to participate in scholastic sport and find their niche.

Community Benefit

Communities may also view sport as an avenue for social change. Because team loyalty is strong in communities, sport franchises have the ability to participate in positive social change that benefits both the team and the community in the long run (Zhang, Pease, & Hui, 1996). Social change can be anything from a push for healthier children to building new parks and playgrounds for children. Howes (2011) states, “few other entities have access to the built in resources for wide social impact. Sports philanthropy turns sponsors into philanthropists, fans into volunteers, and players into change makers, while building a community we can all cheer for.” Sport entities have an unmatched ability to bring communities together in times of adversity. In an almost symbolic manner, the first professional sporting event after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 was held in New York City, a city where grief and terror had taken over the normally loud and busy streets (Politi, 2011). Sports, at first, were not seen as an important factor in helping the city grieve; but soon after, when President Bush called the nation to go about life as normal, the MLB and NFL resumed business and were the first semblance of normal life post 9/11. Ten years later, the two cities most impacted, Washington DC and New York City, met in a symbolic game on Thursday, September 8, 2011 to start the

weekend of memorials across the NFL (Politi, 2011). The use of sporting events to mourn travesties demonstrates that sport has become a national unifier and a symbol of normal life to citizens in the United States.

Professional sports teams are also able to make a positive impact on children and less fortunate community members. Community service efforts have increased significantly across the big five sports leagues (NBA, NFL, NHL, MLB, and MLS) in the United States. Organizations such as the United Way and NFL Play 60 partner with teams to bring local communities resources to help children to lead healthy lifestyles and participate in recreational sports. The Philadelphia Eagles are a prime example. Their community efforts involve building playgrounds for children in less privileged areas of Philadelphia and its suburbs (Howes, 2011). The Eagles then place their logo on the playgrounds to create additional community allegiances towards their brand. By placing their logo on these playgrounds, community members are able to participate in recreational activities and share their love of the Eagles with others who they may not have known before coming to the playground. The logo is also a form of free publicity for the team who is showing their commitment to the community who has been loyal to them since 1933 (Howes, 2011). The playgrounds are meant to be a safe place for children to engage in healthy lifestyle choices. As such, the Eagles also sponsor eye sight checkups for children so those who cannot afford eye exams or glasses, if needed, have the opportunity to have glasses or contacts and be able to go about daily life as normal children (Howes, 2011).

Community involvement is important for a team's reputation in their community. If a team sits idle and does not benefit its community, fan purchasing habits and attitudes will reflect this lack of interest. For example, teams who are perceived as having weak community impacts are likely to experience lower attendance rates than teams perceived as having strong

community impacts. Another result of community involvement relates to the fact that teams frequently rely on community volunteers to help achieve their objectives. Community volunteers are typically drawn to working with professional teams and programs directly impacting their community (Howes, 2011). Engaging community volunteers enriches community pride because community members are active participants in the process.

Success in Washington DC

The Washington Nationals moved to Washington DC in 2005 from Montreal where they were known as the Expos. When they originally moved, they played in the Washington Redskins' old and D.C. United's current venue, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium. In 2008, a brand new facility, Nationals' Park, opened specifically for their use in Southeast DC a part of the city well known for its crime rate and government supported housing (Benfield, 2012). The city wanted to not only rebrand that part of town, but better its transportation infrastructure in the area. Building the stadium seemed the best solution, especially upon researching Baltimore's success building Camden Yards and M&T Bank Stadium (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Initially, lawmakers and residents of the neighborhood were against Nationals Park stating they did not want increased noise, traffic, and the threat of constant construction. Now, seven years later, lawmakers who voted against the stadium have seen an improvement in the way of life and the Southeast DC neighborhood (Benfield, 2012). Residents state an increased participation and mingling among races in the area. They also say the area surrounding the stadium has been remodeled to bring a more sophisticated feel.

Community Unity

The addition of a professional sports team brings the spotlight to the city hosting the team. Cities often insist on branding themselves with the team's name and logo to achieve

greater coverage and higher mentions in the media (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Logos are often seen dozens of times throughout a media broadcast and can be the greatest influence aside from a team's performance to persuade a person thinking of traveling to see the team play. The ideal logo shows the team and its colors as well as an iconic image from the city it represents (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Citizens often feel a stronger connection to the team when the city they call home is mentioned every time the team is on television. The connection and loyalty to the team and the city also helps sponsors of the team grow a loyal, local fan base for their product (Lee, Cornwell, & Babiak, 2013). For example, Coca-Cola, an Atlanta based company, has the beverage sponsorship at Turner Field, home of the Atlanta Braves. Braves' fans are loyal to the brand as Coca-Cola is seen as the hometown soda.

Professional teams also bring a 'big-league' feel to smaller cities that are often overshadowed by larger media markets such as New York and Los Angeles (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). The big time feel brings a greater sense of pride to the citizens of the city and thus increases sales of tickets and merchandise. Citizens desire to be part of the big time feel and proudly wear their teams' merchandise and support the team during the season. To some community members, the team becomes the iconic figure for their city (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Teams can also provide hope for citizens. The success of the NFL's New Orleans Saints in the 2005-2006 season brought a sense of empowerment and hope to New Orleans citizens in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans citizens used the success and growth of the Saints as their motivation to get back on their feet and restore their city.

Community pride is an important aspect of fandom. Fans come from all walks of life with varying backgrounds. Allegiances may be based on factors such as being alumni of a school and generic sports fans are able to relate to an athlete participating in the game (Kirchheimer,

2012). Fans are the most important aspect to a team's success in a region. A professional sports team must understand the needs of its surrounding community. Their needs impact how the team interacts with the citizens, and through that, the community's involvement with the team.

In cities, such as Cleveland, their sports team is how they identify themselves. When the Browns left Cleveland in 1995, the community was devastated; riots ensued, and letters of protest were written to the NFL (O'Rourke, 2003). Many smaller cities, when welcoming their guests, have a sign that states they are the home of a specific sports team. Colleges do the same when their sports teams are successful over the course of the season; this helps drive student applications to their school and national interest (Lee, Cornwell, & Babiak, 2013). In the case of Cleveland, their determination and the history of the team led to a decision by the NFL to promise the next expansion team to Cleveland and for the team to remain the Browns with the same colors (O'Rourke, 2003). This act was important to the city because they were clinging to their past successes especially as the economy in the industrial city was declining.

Another component that must be considered is that of self-esteem and morale within a community. In 2012, "after conducting some 200 studies over the past two decades, Wann (as cited in Kircheimer, 2012, p. 42), a leading researcher on "sports fandom, 'finds consistent results: people who identify themselves as sports fans tend to have lower rates of depression and higher self-esteem than those who don't.'" Employees who are sports fans are also thought to have better morale at work after watching sports, despite the outcome of the game. While a loss often leads to lower morale than a win, sports fans tested during March Madness are generally happier than their coworkers who do not identify as sports fans (Kircheimer, 2012). Sports fans have something to bring them together, especially during a tournament such as the

NCAA Men's National Basketball Tournament in March. For three weeks, the top 68 Division I teams participate in a tournament to decide the national champion.

The breakdown of the color barrier and improvement to public spaces in Washington DC shows a desire to improve the feel of the area surrounding Nationals Park. Sports drive additional tourist dollars, especially in a city, such as Washington DC, where tourism is already high. Sparvero and Chalip (2007) discuss the importance of improving the sport tourists experience to increase the likelihood of those fans returning in the future for another game and trip to the city. Washington DC economic development director John Ross (as cited in Benfield, 2012) stated:

In the past three years, the ballpark fee, a tax levied on the city's 1,800 largest businesses, has brought in \$85 million, double what the city had projected. Sales taxes at the stadium have lagged behind estimates because of lower attendance, but the city's overall take has been so strong that millions in excess collections have been used to balance the DC budget. The gusher of tax dollars will allow the District to pay off the 30-year stadium bonds as much as 12 years early, which will let the city scrap the business tax sooner than planned.

The success of rebranding Southeast DC has allowed for an increase in tax collection that could pay off the city's debt twelve years earlier than expected. As the Washington Nationals continue to be a competitive team in the National League East, their ticket sales will increase, righting the troubles Ross mentioned with attendance.

Stadia

Hosting hallmark events and building stadia is a costly endeavor. An expectation associated with the significant investment is that community members will experience economic

benefits in their community. Politicians and supporters frequently espouse the notion that new stadiums lead to economic growth (Jasina & Rotthoff, 2008). Politicians suggest that building a new stadium or bringing a team to their city will provide new jobs in the community and promote spending. The majority of the economic growth a city expects from a new team or stadium comes from taxes on ticket, merchandise, and concession sales (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Local municipalities are able to immediately collect taxes and allocate new money into the budget. Governments hope for successful teams to be housed in facilities because it leads to increased ticket sales as well as merchandising and concessions. Multi-use venues are a preferred option for smaller cities. A basketball arena, similar to the Amway Center in Orlando, Florida, that is also used for family shows (e.g., circus, Disney on Ice), hockey games, concerts, and basketball tournaments elongates the use of the facility and brings more revenue into the arena and in turn the city. When a venue sits unused for much of the season, the upkeep costs often outweigh the benefits of having the stadium in the area.

Private entities have also begun to help governments pay for the new stadia. Research shows that, since 1985, private ownership has covered twenty percent or more of facility repairs and/or new stadia (Crompton, 2004). The shift in payment is significant for politicians because they are able to better push the stadium when they can tell their constituents the stadium is being jointly funded by the team. City officials are also able to create additional part time, full time, and/or temporary jobs in the stadium. While the team may bring some of their own full time employees when they move; custodial, concessions, merchandise, and ticket staffs must be hired to work games and events in the venue (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Most of these jobs would be considered seasonal and an ideal job for the high school or college students or adults in need of a second job looking to make a few extra dollars. However, if the stadium is used year

round for a variety of events, more jobs are created bringing steady income into homes in the community. Higher incomes often mean more money returned in spending to the local economy.

Minor League Baseball stadiums have only been economically effective in communities where they are used for more than the baseball season. Communities see worth in a stadium they can use for community baseball tournaments and championships, concerts, parades, and other community gatherings (Johnson, 1998). Having a specific plan for the stadium during the off season often encourages community members to vote for building and support the public funding of a stadium. Due to the ever increasing costs, it is important for politicians and community leaders to find other uses for stadia to gain public support, especially for small venues, such as those for Minor League Baseball teams. Small town teams are often the most successful because their fan base is the most loyal. Teams located in towns such as Hickory, North Carolina and Wappinger Falls, New York are often among the top 25 highest grossing teams over the course of the season (Johnson, 1998). Their loyalty is due to the pride in which the community feels in hosting a team in their city. Sport has made an impact to communities across the world. Frequently, we see communities bid for hallmark sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup or the Summer and Winter Olympics. These communities, if chosen, work hard to project a new front to the world. Often communities desire the ability to demonstrate growth and project an image as being an ideal tourist destination for families.

Governments know the immediate and potentially long-term value a hallmark event, stadium, and/or professional team can bring to their community. Immediate impacts governments receive from sport investment are in the form of sales taxes on merchandise, ticket sales, and concession sales. They also see an increase in jobs in their area, especially if a

venue is a multi-use facility creating the need for year-round staff (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007). Increased jobs in an area also increase spending and the taxes a government earns from that spending help boost the economy. Sparvero and Chalip (2007) state venues that are used year round and hire local employees have a stronger relationship with city government because they are directly driving money to the local government. Local governments are more likely to have a good relationship with the team's owner if they are willing to work with the local community to improve economic conditions (Benfield, 2012).

Sports Tourism

Sports tourism is defined as “sport-based travel away from the home environment for a limited time, where sport is characterized by unique rule sets, competition related to physical prowess, and a playful nature” (Dixon, Backman, Backman, & Norman, 2012, p. 6). It is a growing industry and especially prevalent during hallmark sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup, NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, and Summer and Winter Olympic Games. Sport tourism is also unique in its form because the city hosting the event is guaranteed hotel reservations, rental cars, and increased apparel, food and ticket sales: “In 2001, the Travel Industry Association of America reported that event sport tourism produced \$27 billion in the USA. In the same year, approximately 38% of U.S. adults attended a sporting event, competition, or tournament as a spectator or participant while on a trip of 50 miles or more” (Dixon, Backman, Backman, & Norman, 2012, p. 6). City planners strive to maximize profits on those already traveling for business or pleasure and have them spend additional money on games. For example, Washington DC is the home of many music halls, theaters, museums, and monuments. However, the city also has seven professional sports teams competing for tourism money. The teams do not all play during the same season, but there is a team playing at any given time

throughout the year which provides increased opportunities for tourists to attend games while traveling to see the nation's other offerings.

There are many advantages to sport tourism, especially when a new stadium is involved. By shifting some of the tax cost of the community and to the tourists, community members are likely to be more receptive to the costs of building a new stadium when they know the burden is shifted from them (Dixon, Backman, Backman, & Norman, 2012). Other forms of funding may also come from sponsorship sales and private donations.

The intersection of Economic and Social Concerns

Yet another social concern ties directly to economic impacts of sport. In Brazil, protesters are taking to the street to demonstrate against the large amounts of money being spent by the government on FIFA stadiums when they do not have decent health care, public education, or infrastructure (Watts, 2013). The government was afraid the daily demonstrations endangered the event and its success, as well as the Summer Olympics in 2016. Many who oppose the building of stadiums would rather see the money spent on bettering the community and addressing existing problems. Instead, citizens are being taxed at a higher rate and the country is taking on additional debt to host the Olympics. Corruption is suspected with those involved in the governments, FIFA executives, and those helping create broadcast deals. Former Brazilian soccer players warned the citizens that something was not right with the situation as FIFA announced record breaking broadcast deals and government downplayed the lateness of getting stadiums built (Watts, 2013). Suspicion of the construction companies colluding with the government to be the beneficiaries of a large percentage of the revenues collected in the stadiums during the World Cup has been rampant.

Sport Events versus Sport Teams

Many cities host both sport events and sports teams. In cities such as New York or Boston, there are opportunities to host large, annual marathons in addition to MLB, NHL, NBA, MLS, and NFL teams. As a result, sports are engrained in daily life. Economically, however, the events and teams have a different impact on the city. While the annual events often drive increased revenues through hotel stays, rental cars, and restaurants, the impact generally lasts for a few days and the city returns to normal life. The sports season often drives increased hotel stays on weekends through the course of the season and cities can often draw increased revenue from parking fees. Each type of event has positive and negative effects on the city.

The Boston Marathon, for example, in 2012 was expected to generate 137.5 million dollars in spending in the city (Boston Athletic Association, 2012). The event takes place every year on Patriot's Day. While the event has seen its shares of ups and downs, it is an important race on an elite runner's calendar every year. The city also benefits greatly from the event for many reasons. First and foremost, the event does not require a venue. It only requires road closures and increased security and transportation options (Boston Athletic Association, 2012). Because the event has been around since 1897, the city has detailed plans for the race. The Marathon brings athletes and media from all over the world with almost 5,000 runners from outside of the United States and over 1,000 media members (Boston Athletic Association, 2012). While the Marathon brings high revenues to the city, the event requires extensive planning to ensure the race occurs without danger. Boston Police, outside hired security, and race staff work together to keep all participants and spectators safe during the course of the race festivities. Roads are closed to cars and runners go through a security check before the race. The greatest

risk comes from the spectators as it is impossible for security to check 500,000 or more spectators and the passersby on their way to work or school (Boston Athletic Association, 2012).

Boston sports fans are considered some of the most loyal, giving staying power to their big five teams, the Revolution, Bruins, Red Sox, Celtics, and Patriots. Indeed, “what makes up a great sports town? Loyalty, tradition, passion--a visceral connection between a city and its teams” (Swift, Holmes, Kim, & Mravic, 2000, p. 29). There have been discussions about tearing down Fenway Park and replacing it with a modern park, but over 100 years of tradition in the stadium and protests from the fans encouraged the Boston Red Sox and government to abandon that discussion. Sports fans are not only loyal to their teams and the cities they come from, but the tradition surrounding franchises.

The New England Patriots and Boston Celtics have seen increased success over the last decade and the fans have become accustomed to seeing their team succeed. The team’s success is important to the fans; however, their loyalty drives them to continue purchasing tickets to see their team play even when the team is not playing well. Because Boston teams are rich in tradition, fans that live all over the country will travel to see them play. This leads back to sports tourism and increased city revenues from tax dollars. Similarly, hosting five sports teams in one city can be costly. The Boston Bruins and Celtics both call the TD Garden Arena home allowing the city to save money by having two teams play in one venue. Fenway Park has not been renovated since 2011 and is over 100 years old, yet another way the city saves the taxpayers from paying for a new facility. The city also benefits from the New England Patriots sharing their venue, Gillette Stadium, with the New England Revolution, a cost saving measure for the city, preventing them from having to build a new soccer specific stadium for the MLS team.

Venezuelan Life

Venezuela is a country situated on the northern tip of South America to the east of Colombia. Their official language is Spanish. Until the late twentieth century, Venezuela was plagued by many of the same social problems that many Latin and South American countries face today. While issues such as the drug trade, poverty, and social violence still exist in the country; they are lessened by the initiatives put in place by Hugo Chávez (Grandin, 2013). During the course of his presidency, Chávez targeted rising crime and poverty and created more jobs to better the lifestyles of citizens. Chávez vowed to solve the social problems by eliminating the country's debt and doubling the minimum wage to 3,000 Bolivars a day (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003). He believed that by providing jobs in the oil industry and increasing education, he could decrease social injustice.

Upon his election in 1998, Chávez appealed to the poor living in the slums of the city. Increased immigration from poorer countries (Dominican Republic and Ecuador) to Venezuela and migration of the rural population into the cities had caused overcrowding and created slum communities. The migration had also caused greater differences between the classes and the development of a poverty culture (Platone, 1998).

His efforts were aimed at decreasing the amount of people living in the cities and minimalizing discrepancies between the rich and the poor. By increasing minimum wage and focusing his efforts on increasing jobs in the oil industry, Chávez was able to reduce those living in poverty from 42.6% to 26.7% in his 14 years in office (Grandin, 2013). Though many still live in poverty in Venezuela, the drastic reduction goes against what many believe Chávez to be. His reputation in the United States, before his death, was similar to that of Cuban dictator, Fidel Castro: a mass murderer and a dictator. However, Chávez's most important reputation, the one

at home, is one of trust. He appealed to those who needed help, “one-half of Chávez’s supporters are people who think their lives are better off because of his massive expansion of state services, including healthcare and education, despite the real problems of crime, corruption, shortages, and inflation” (Grandin, 2013, p. 12).

During Chávez’s presidency, the economy shifted from an agricultural based to an oil based economy. The shift allowed the country to pull itself from debt to others and focus on receiving money owed them by other countries, such as Cuba. For example, when Venezuela began to focus its efforts on the oil business, Chávez placed a Venezuelan representative on the board of *Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)* and helped raise the cost of a barrel of oil to approximately \$20 a barrel, up from \$10 (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003). The increased revenues helped Venezuela become a major oil producer for the world. Venezuela spent \$2B in job programs, health care, and education in 2002 (Platone, 1998). Chávez wanted to address social concerns via education and improving quality of life. Added revenues from oil production and receiving payments from Cuba on their loans allowed Chávez to provide for Venezuelans. The shift in economy to oil also decreased the gap between the wealthy and the poor and created a much larger middle class than Venezuela had ever seen (Hall, 2012).

Chávez also made key policy changes that were important to government revenues and allowing citizens to have voting power. Early in his presidency, he implemented two taxes. The first was on renters; the more rent charged for a space, the more the owner owed the government (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003). This move was popular with the poor because it ultimately lowered their rent and allowed them to save more money. Another tax Chávez added was on land owners who had more than 5,000 hectares of unused land (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003). He wanted to continue to have some of the economy focused on agriculture to avoid

fully importing produce and meats. In doing so, he wanted to maximize the resources the country already had. Chavez placed a tax on the land to encourage landowners to sell the land or hire added help to increase agriculture operations.

The second policy change gave more power to the Venezuelan people. While they were already a democracy and had voting privileges to elect their president, Chávez gave them the ability to impeach their leader: “According to Chavez, representative democracy with regularly scheduled elections disempowers the people. Article 71 provides that, if an elected government does not perform, it can be abolished by popular referendum. All that is required to call such a referendum is the signatures of 10% of the eligible voters” (Sylvia & Donopolos, 2003, p. 68). The attempt was to eliminate the violent coups that had occurred in the last 50 years and give the citizens the opportunity to express their opinions and be involved. One of the most recent uprisings occurred in 1989: “The spark came in February 1989, when the recently inaugurated President Carlos Andrés Pérez, who had run against the International Monetary Fund, said that he had no choice but to submit to its dictates. He announced a plan to abolish food and fuel subsidies, increase gas prices, privatize state industries, and cut spending on healthcare and education” (Grandin, 2013, p. 12). The former president’s initiatives decreased access to the necessary items in life: food and jobs. Those living in poverty fell further into poverty and the amount of people living in the slums increased dramatically. Chávez’s goal when he took office was to reverse these policies and give the power back to the people.

Despite the efforts by Chávez to better life for Venezuelans, the poor financial decisions by the government continued. By 2002, the Bolivar had been devalued by 30 percent from when he took power, a neo-liberal policy decision that Chavez claimed to have opposed (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003). Another financial issue in Venezuela is the lack of money in the country’s

foreign policy reserves. Despite his statement that he would rather miss a debt payment than see the people of Venezuela suffer, Castro made sure to never miss a payment causing the reserves to run low (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003). Creating an even greater issue of the government being unable to address the issues of the poor. In early 2002, dissident officers in the military began to break from the regime and call for Chavez's resignation; the media found evidence that 498 senior officers were investigated for their loyalty to the regime (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003). To rectify this situation, despite a declining economy, the government offered pay raises to its loyal officers and government loans at a significantly reduced rate than the general public (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003) which further hurt the economy of the country.

The wealthy typically owned the media outlets in Venezuela making it easy for them to 'act out' against Chávez by shutting down regular programming and showing anti-Chávez commercials or riots in the streets promoting his ousting (Jones, 2007). While the private ownership of the stations gives owners the right to broadcast whatever they choose, they are still under contract with the government to be on national TV. This is important because in 2002, the government chose not to renew contracts with multiple TV stations (Jones, 2007). By choosing not to renew television contracts, the government indirectly exercised its power to control what the media can and cannot broadcast. The oppression of media broadcasts encouraged others to keep their opinions to themselves in fear that they or their families would lose their jobs or, worse, be arrested for their opinions. During his rise to power, he had various stations broadcasting images of him helping the poor creating the illusion that he was a poor man's dictator to grow his popularity amongst the people (Sylvia & Donopoulos, 2003).

Baseball Around the World

As a sport, baseball is often referred to as America's Pastime. However, what most do not realize is baseball is played in many other countries besides the United States. The sport originally spread to Cuba when successful businessmen sent their sons to the United States for college to receive higher education in the mid and late 1800s (Ruck, 2012). Young men were sent to the United States to take courses and eventually earn business and law degrees to continue family traditions and businesses. While in the United States, they learned the country's sport: baseball. Upon returning to their country, they continued to play the game amongst those who learned it in the United States and taught the game to their colleagues (Ruck, 2012). These athletes by the end of the nineteenth century were spreading the sport to other Caribbean and Latin American countries including the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Venezuela (Jamail, 2008). These four countries are now some of the strongest baseball playing countries in the world.

Baseball and Venezuela

Common histories between Cuba and Venezuela unified the countries as recently as 2000 in the sport. At its origin, baseball was brought to Venezuela in 1890 when a Cuban cigar factory opened in Caracas (Jamail, 2008). The company brought some of its Cuban employees with them to open the factory and also hired Venezuelan employees to help continued growth of the company. The Cuban employees continued their tradition of playing baseball during their free time; it did not take long for the Venezuelan workers to gain interest in the sport and learn how to play (Jamail, 2008). Not only was Cuba the reason Venezuelans first interacted with the game, but the first two baseball clubs in Venezuela were started by Cubans (Jamail, 2008). By 1900, Venezuelans had started their own teams, mostly in Caracas and the surrounding suburbs.

The Cubans continued to be a presence in Venezuelan baseball until the cigar factory closed. However, even after the closing of the factory, the two countries continued to have international games between their top clubs and national teams. Venezuelan teams also began traveling to the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico for international competitions.

Surprisingly, American influences in Venezuelan baseball did not begin until twelve years after the initial introduction by the Cubans, when a United States military ship docked in La Guaria, Venezuela for two nights ("Plus Baseball: Venezuelan League Cancels its Season," 2003). By 1902, Venezuelan leagues had formed and rivalries were already in place. However, Club Caracas traveled to play the American sailors in the country's first international game, losing by a small margin of three runs (Jamail, 2008). Following that event, American baseball teams did not return until the 1920s when the United States learned of the rich oil reserves located in Venezuela. Similar to the Cubans, the American drilling companies sent their employees to Venezuela to work and drill for oil; but while they were there continued to play the game ("Plus Baseball: Venezuelan League Cancels its Season," 2003). While the American employees were in Venezuela playing baseball recreationally, another semi-pro American team did not return to Venezuela until 1928 (Jamail, 2008). The American teams did not affect the way the Venezuelans played baseball because the country had already formed the game, similar to the Cubans, to their own needs. However, the international games sparked a large increase in teams outside of the large cities as well as almost doubling the teams already in existence in the cities (Jamail, 2008).

The most important international game played by the Venezuelans occurred in 1941 when they beat Cuba to win their first amateur baseball title (Jamail, 2008). This win was especially important to the Venezuelans because they had learned to play the game from Cuba.

Both countries were especially proud of the win; the Cubans felt as though they had mastered the sport so well they could teach it to others successfully and the Venezuelans had won the biggest baseball game of their history (Jamail, 2008). After the win, baseball was named the official sport of Venezuela and baseball players became revered as heroes, especially those who were on the 1941 team (Tyler, 2000). The Venezuelan government and citizens have placed great significance on the sport which has been used to improve lives socially and economically. Baseball has also been used as a politically unifying tool.

Ruck (2012) discusses other factors influencing the Venezuelan's desire to align their country with the American sport rather than play the typical Spanish game of football (also known as soccer). He discusses political reasoning as the strongest influence because both Venezuela and Cuba had recently gained their independence from Spain. Both countries retained the Spanish culture and language in their everyday lives and felt the desire to distinguish themselves as different and independent of Spain. Baseball allowed Cuba and Venezuela to diverge from traditional Spanish culture and become closer to the United States because of the bond created by baseball, even if, at the time, their best athletes were not allowed to participate in the professional leagues (Ruck, 2012).

Political similarities continued to be a unifying factor between Cuba and Venezuela as recently as 2000 when the countries played a friendly game of baseball where both dictators managed and played on their respective country's team (Echevarría, 2000). Signed by Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez, the *Convenio Integral de Cooperación* deal promised five years of oil trade from Venezuela to Cuba as well as Havana paying off some of the \$70M debt it owes Venezuela. Medical professionals in Venezuela were also given training in better and safer practices from Cuban doctors as part of the deal (Gunson, 2000).

Synthesis of Literature

From the literature review, sport is understood to have many positive and negative impacts on a community. Key impacts of sport are the social and economic decisions made by cities and teams to host sport. Politicians often over-promote the benefits of sport without considering the negative impact it may have on their city. When sports teams and events come to a city and leave the city with high amounts of debt and in worse shape than they were when the team or event arrived, sport has not performed its civil duty (Howes, 2011). Hosting sport is costly and can place a burden on the tax payers and city budgets.

However, the costs are often outweighed by the benefits of hosting sport. Communities benefit greatly from service efforts by the teams and athletes (Zhang, Pease, & Hui, 1996). Hosting sport also gives cities the opportunity to be seen by thousands of people on a weekly basis during their team's season. Though there is not a direct correlation between TV time and increased tourism to an area, TV time does provide teams, their sponsors, and cities free advertising while the game is being played.

With this information, the following study will discuss how baseball has socially and economically affected the Venezuelan population. Despite the MLB limiting the number of players with international visas, Venezuela continues to be one of the strongest producing countries for baseball talent. Baseball fans in Venezuela are well versed on the statistics and successes of their countries baseball stars (Jamail, 2008). And, due to their desire to separate themselves from Spain, Venezuelans focus their sporting efforts on baseball.

Rationale for the Study

The reason for this study is to gain an understanding of the economic and social impacts baseball has had in Venezuela. This study will help baseball stakeholders in Venezuela and the United States understand the perceived benefits of the sport in Venezuelan communities. Stakeholders include baseball coaches, professional and semi-pro baseball players, and Venezuelan government officials. While the history of baseball in Venezuela has been examined, there is a gap in the history and how the sport affects the country. Based on the history of the sport and rising crime rates, professional athletes in Venezuela have been forced to hire personal security to avoid being the victims of violent crimes and kidnappings. Because the economic and social impacts of baseball have not been studied in Venezuela, interviews will be conducted with youth baseball coaches, instructors, and government officials.

In using qualitative data, this study seeks to create common themes among survey participants to understand the impacts baseball has had on recent generations in Venezuela. Since the inception of the MLB, a total of 286 Venezuelan players have played professionally in the United States. The success of Venezuelans in the MLB and international events had led to the increase in interest in baseball across the country. It is important for the country and its stakeholders to understand the social and economic impact the game has had on Venezuela.

Statement of the Problem

In Venezuela, baseball has been studied from a historical perspective; however, there is limited knowledge of how Venezuelan baseball stakeholders view the impact of baseball in their country. While the MLB has established baseball academies and a professional league affiliated with its teams, a study has not been done to understand how baseball has affected the economic and social climate in Venezuela.

Research indicates that the MLB has a negative impact on the baseball environment in Venezuela. There is also research on the history of baseball in Venezuela, including but not limited to, the influence of Cuba and the United States on the baseball culture. However, studies have not been done to understand the perceived economic and social benefits of the sport. There have been instances where the game has been used in “peace building” efforts with Cuba and there are MLB academies throughout the country. These efforts by outside organizations, other countries, and the Venezuelan government will have made an impact on the perceptions of the Venezuelan people. This study sought to understand the perceived benefits of baseball in Venezuela to bridge the gap between the people and the government.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Research Questions

Research questions for this study were created based on the overall question of the study and the themes of literature review.

1. How do stakeholders define and describe the role of baseball in Venezuela?
2. According to stakeholders, what are the major social implications of hosting and promoting baseball in Venezuela?
3. According to stakeholders, what are the major economic implications of hosting and promoting baseball in Venezuela?

Population and Sampling

While there are many stakeholders in Venezuelan baseball, eight to twelve interviews were to be conducted. Because the sample size was small, each participant was individually selected via the purposeful sampling technique based on their involvement with baseball. Purposeful sampling allowed for handpicked interviewees to speak knowledgably about social and economic impacts of baseball in Venezuela. Those selected for the study were highly involved in baseball as youth coaches or government officials. As a secondary plan, a snowball sampling method was used. If a sample of eight to twelve participants was not created, participants were be asked to recommend someone who they thought could speak knowledgably to the topics for the study. The same criteria applied for anyone referred by interview participants.

Baseball coaches and instructors, especially at the youth level, were of interest for this study because they are directly involved with the communities. They were able to discuss how baseball impacts the kids they coach and their families on a weekly basis. Their experiences in the community were vital to the study because they have an understanding of the importance of baseball to the Venezuelan people.

Similar to the United States, Venezuela has a three-branch federal government, divided into 23 states with their own governments, and then is divided further into districts that also have governments (Structure and Policies, 2011). The Venezuelan Government also has ministries that focus on specific political and social issues. Most importantly for this study, members of the Ministry of Sport, headed by newly appointed Alejandra Benitez, were of interest. Government officials in the Ministry of Sport will be able to most knowledgeably discuss the economic impact and morale of the Venezuelan people as it relates to baseball.

Research Design and Instrumentation

A qualitative research design was used for this study. This study serves as a case study because of its exploratory nature. Due to the lack of research on the impact of baseball in Venezuela, this study sought to explore how key stakeholders in the sport view the impacts of baseball socially and economically. Questions were designed based on the common themes found in the literature review. These interview questions were designed to better understand how baseball has impacted Venezuela socially and economically. As discussed in *Research Methods: How to Conduct Research in Recreation, Parks, Sport, and Tourism* (Riddick & Russell, 2015), a semi-structured in-depth interview technique was used; more specifically, a discovery interview. The semi-structured in-depth interview allowed questions to be open-ended and the interviewee to openly speak about their opinions regarding the topic. As this study explored a

topic that had not been researched, it was imperative to get as much information as possible from each person being interviewed as to be able to categorize common responses. Discovery interviews are ideal for gathering perspectives about a specific issue or topic (Riddick & Russell, 2015). Using a discovery interview allowed interviewees to share their perspectives via open ended questions.

As a bounded study, participant responses to interview questions were not able to be generalized to a larger population. Interview participants were selected for their participation in the growth of the sport and their ability to speak expertly on the current situation of baseball in Venezuela. Because interview participants were picked due to their knowledge of the game and the state of the game in Venezuela, their answers can help better direct the future state of baseball and guide current efforts to maximize economic and social impacts.

The people selected to participate in this study were expected to be able to speak openly and knowledgeably about the impacts of baseball in Venezuela. They are baseball stakeholders in the country in the form of coaches, government officials, and instructors. Deemed stakeholders in Venezuelan baseball, they were representing a small percentage of the population involved in the sport and were able to speak for the baseball community as a whole.

Research Setting

In Venezuela, baseball is an important community game. Similar to football in the United States and soccer in other South American and Latin American countries, children go into the streets to play baseball and interact with other children in their community (Ruck, 2012). From the time baseball was brought to Venezuela in the late 1800s until the 1940s, Venezuela had not been a dominant force in the international baseball community. In 1941, Venezuela won their first big international baseball game and from then on has been a strong competitor

in international competitions (Jamail, 2008). Baseball has also been used to show political unity between Venezuela and Cuba; the two countries have played friendly games when they have signed economic or political agreements (Gunson, 2000). The MLB has also set up many academies in Venezuela to train Venezuelan athletes to become members of MLB and MiLB teams (Vargas, 2000). These academies provide instruction for children as young as twelve with hopes of them signing a professional contract to play in either the Venezuelan Winter League, MiLB, or MLB.

Interviews for this study were conducted via Skype. It is important to note that while the interviewer and interviewee were in different locations, the use of Skype allowed for “face-to-face” interviews to take place. Most interviews were conducted in Spanish and then translated into English. Those asked to participate in this study have different roles in Venezuela and in Venezuelan baseball. While no set location was required for the purpose of the interviews, it was preferred that each party was located in a quiet area with strong internet connection to ensure the interview was distraction free.

Data Collection

Data for this study was conducted via Skype interviews. Interviews, took approximately 30-45 minutes. People chosen to participate in this study were considered knowledgeable stakeholders of the state and importance of baseball in Venezuela. Interviews were conducted and recorded via Skype. If the interviewee was most comfortable speaking Spanish, interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated into English afterwards. If done in Spanish, another fluent Spanish speaker was present to ensure all information was interpreted accurately. For more information on interview protocol, see Appendix A. Interview questions were submitted to

and approved by George Mason University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in accordance with ethical considerations for conducting research.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic coding. Because this study was based on interviews, common themes were expected to emerge. Once the interviews were translated and transcribed, overlapping themes from interview responses were compared based on the research questions. These themes were helpful to understanding the common thoughts baseball stakeholders have about its impacts in Venezuela. Themes were analyzed and compared to see which themes had the strongest arguments made for them and which act as counter arguments. The themes that emerged were useful to understanding how baseball stakeholders felt that the sport has impacted the Venezuelan people. Riddick and Russell (2015, p. 277) noted that coding "involves taking text data or images gathered during data collection and segmenting sentences, paragraphs, or images into categories and labeling those categories with a term." By using codes, data collected in this study was meaningfully analyzed and compared to other similar interview responses.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained for all study participants. Anonymity was created by either changing the names of each interview participant or giving them names such as "Coach 1." To create a comfortable atmosphere for each interviewee, it was important for them to remain anonymous, especially with the current political climate in Venezuela. Anonymity allowed each participant to speak freely about their opinions without feeling as though repercussions will come from participating.

Data was collected by recording, transcribing and, finally, translating the interviews. To maintain credibility and the integrity of each participant's interview, another fluent Spanish

speaker was present to ensure all conversations were interpreted accurately from interviewer to interviewee and vice versa. This Spanish interpreter was a disinterested third party so the peer debriefing method could be used to ensure unbiased results (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011). The participant validation method was also used. Answers were repeated back to interviewees to ensure proper interpretation of their response (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Questions were repeated using different wording to see if the interviewee answered the question similarly the second time. By doing this, themes became more defined and detailed in the interviews.

Study Limitations and Discussion

Because interviews were conducted via Skype, interviewees could not be observed in their roles in baseball. Skype also limited the ability to read nonverbal communications that could be noticed in a true face-to-face interview. The use of Skype helped reduce the limitations created by phone or email interviews; however, emotions, facial expressions, and the use of hand gestures could have been lost in the connection. Lastly, without attending and observing a baseball game, or multiple, in Venezuela, it is impossible to fully understand the impact the game has on communities.

Due to the nature of this study, the views of interview participants could not be expanded outside their role in baseball or geographical region. Because the study was qualitative, the views expressed in each interview were limited to those who participate in baseball in similar roles. Those picked to interview were representative of a specific group within the Venezuelan baseball community; however, their responses and common themes will support future studies on the economic and social impact of baseball and other developing sports in Venezuela.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The participants of the study were all Venezuelan born with high levels of involvement (both professionally and recreationally) in baseball. All participants still live in the country. The researcher emailed six possible participants who promised to provide up to five additional participants. Only four total interviews were conducted. No interviews were discarded due to inconsistent information. Overall response rate for the researcher's emails was 0.67.

The final participants were all male, on par for baseball in Venezuela. Due to confidentiality reasons, all identifying information was removed and coded by their occupation and/or its relevance to baseball in Venezuela. The final participants represented were:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Broadcaster | 3. Coach 2 |
| 2. Coach 1 | 4. Psychologist |

Question #1: The Role of Baseball in Venezuela

How do stakeholders define and describe the role of baseball in Venezuela?

Overview

The participants of the study unanimously agreed on two descriptions of the role of baseball in Venezuela. They described baseball as (1) being the national pastime and a way of life in Venezuela and (2) as an educator for youth due to the young age in which boys begin playing. While all participants mentioned these two aspects of baseball in their description of baseball in either their lives or the lives of those around them, they differed in their approach to

the description. This appeared to be due to whether or not they played the sport as a child or if they participated in soccer or basketball instead, Venezuela's other two large sports.

Baseball as the National Pastime and a Way of Life

Since the game in 1941 when Venezuela beat Cuba (its ally and baseball mentor) in a friendly game between the two countries, baseball has been recognized as the national sport of Venezuela by the government. Study participants were adamant that the declaration of baseball as a national sport is a large factor to why everyone in the country follows the sport. As such, Venezuelan baseball fans are constantly following their hometown athletes in whatever professional leagues they play for.

Coach 2 simply stated "[b]aseball is a passion." This statement was further reiterated by the psychologist when he said "Because baseball in Venezuela is the national sport." The broadcaster jumped in saying "baseball is the country's national pastime." While these statements are not profound, this distinction, and outright proclamation, of baseball's importance to the country further emphasized the pride that Venezuelans have in their professional baseball players around the world.

The Venezuelan Professional Baseball League plays their season while the MLB is in the off season (October-February). Because of this, the broadcaster said, "[f]rom October until February when they have the final, I work for the radio transmission of the Tigers team. When the season is over and the finals are completed, I work with my partners to compare the performance of the Venezuelans in MLB. All year I work in baseball, all year." And "baseball represents a way of life, a style of life. In Venezuela baseball carries a lot of passion. We, the Venezuelans, are followers of the [home] team. The spirit that transmits in a stadium is an incomparable environment." Coach 1 similarly discussed this topic when he quipped, "[i]n

national competitions, an attendance pattern is observed at the massive sports field at any level of youth baseball. Already in the professional leagues, teams like Magallanes and Caracas monopolize the scene because of their rivalry and the idiosyncrasy of the Venezuelan that motivates them to attend these teams [games].” Baseball is such a priority to the people of Venezuela that, even when their team is not playing, they follow the games and goes to games to keep themselves in the know to be able to discuss what is happening around the league.

Baseball as an Educator

In discussing baseball’s impact on their personal lives, study participants discussed how it positively benefited them as youth. While this will be discussed in more detail in question two, it is important to note that, in their descriptions, three of four participants stated that baseball was an important factor in teaching them as children and the other participant emphasized he noticed the same in friends and family members.

Coach 2, when asked to describe the significance of baseball in his life, said “[t]o me, baseball is a sport that is able to help people to not only play for a team and compete, but helps them to grow.” In the same way, the broadcaster stated, “the sport helps people with tolerance. They watch and play the game and learn to be around people who are fans of different teams.” Baseball as described by Coach 2 and the broadcaster is a way for people, specifically youth, to learn moral values and use those to approach other aspects of life. It is also a tool for members of society to learn to interact with and respect others.

Coach 1 approached baseball as a way for children to be active in their communities and lifestyles. He said, “[t]oday, with the advance of video games, it is of capital importance that the children participate in a physical activity. Baseball as a physical activity is a tool for the critical development of children now.” The psychologist reiterated this point when he said, “so that has

an impact on kids when they grow up. And most of the Venezuelan kids will tell you that at some point they have played baseball in the street, club, or in a similar way some have played softball.” These two opinions of baseball educator speak to using sports as a way to teach children how to be active and live healthy lifestyles.

Summary of the Role of Baseball

Baseball stakeholders described and defined baseball in two ways as:

1. The national pastime of Venezuela; and
2. An educator for youth.

As it relates to baseball being the national pastime of Venezuela, all four stakeholders discussed that baseball is engrained in Venezuelan culture. Most of them point-blank stated that the sport was the national game or pastime of the country. They also stated that baseball is followed year round by Venezuelan fans because they are passionate about the game and the products of their state and country. Many will follow the professional athletes in the MLB and other professional leagues around the world and then go see them play when they return to Venezuela for the Venezuelan Professional Baseball League during the MLB’s off season.

Baseball was also defined as an educator for youth for its ability to teach children life lessons about working as a team and being around people different than them. It also allows them to grow as people making friends and connections that can last a lifetime. Some stakeholders also described baseball as teaching youth to be active and lead a healthy lifestyle rather than sitting at home playing video games.

Question #2: Social Implications of Baseball in Venezuela

According to stakeholders, what are the major social implications of hosting and promoting baseball in Venezuela?

Overview

The implications addressed by study participants consider different aspects of baseball in Venezuela. The three overall themes addressed by the participants are (1) that baseball is a means of increased social interactions; (2) the impacts of baseball academies on the country, and (3) the character building of athletes at a young age. It is important that these themes not only addressed societal norms but also interacting with their peers and family members on an interpersonal level.

Baseball and Social Interaction

Study participants emphasized that baseball provides a common conversation theme for family and friends. They all made sure to bring this up when discussing how baseball has impacted their lives and the lives of those in their families. Many cited baseball as a force that allowed them to spend quality time with their friends and families. Because baseball is the national sport of Venezuela, it is a passion for most people whether they have played or not, giving many people something in common to talk about.

The psychologist said:

First, in my family, everybody loves baseball. Maybe not 100% but maybe 60% or maybe they're just like some fans in other countries where maybe they're just fans when their local team plays. And when they are eliminated from the round robin or the semi-final they don't follow baseball anymore. So I think it has helped me to get around people, to socialize, to get to know some of the people better and also it has helped me get involved with my family a lot more, especially my mother's family. You know my mother's side. Because they are a large amount of family members. There are more family members on my

mother's side than my father's side. My father's side, they're Italian so they're not that related to baseball. But I can tell you when I was in college studying my undergrad me and my uncle, my father's brother, we would watch the last 7 games in the final. The Venezuelan World Series. That was very significant to me. Because it was one of the few times my uncle and I had time to be with each other. I mean when he was not busy with work and I was not busy with my studies. So I mean we watched the whole 7 games on his TV set. And we were talking and having a great dialogue. So I would say baseball was an excuse to be closer to my family members and to some of my friends.

Coach 2 stated: "in the majority of citizens it is possible to say that many families come together to watch the games of amateur teams and professional leagues." He went on to say "and after the games, they gather with their peers and the families of the various teams." By saying this he reiterated the importance of baseball to the people of Venezuela; while winning and losing is important to them, they can still come together after the game ends to interact with their family and friends with fandom for a different team without holding a grudge. Coach 1 agreed by saying, "[i]n the family the impact is impressive. When a child between the ages of 5 and 13 goes to play, the parents and grandparents organize amongst themselves to accompany the player to cheer him on. They also bring food for the athlete to share with his teammates, including the technical staff."

Another interesting piece of baseball's impact on social interaction was discussed by the Psychologist when he discusses that baseball is part of the everyday life in Venezuela. He explained how many slang terms are derived from baseball meanings. For example, "I am with a group of friends and a new girl arrives and she's attractive, I would tell the friend that brought

her, “can you pitch me that gal?” Or, there is a phrase that is popular on Venezuelan TV there is a commercial where there is a guy who brings beer and the guy who is receiving him at home says “hey how come you’re so late?” and he says “I was coming from a base” which means he was caught cheating on his girlfriend.” Coach 1 concurred when he said, “[b]aseball is so important to the Venezuelan that in the colloquial language, baseball slang is used. For example, it is very common to use the phrase “you’ve been struck out” to refer to someone who was wrong or did something in an unjust way.” Both participants commented on the colloquial language piece to further emphasize how engrained baseball is in Venezuela’s daily life.

Despite the positives that he discusses, Coach 2 also mentioned how the parental involvement can also be detrimental to athletes. He said, “parents pretend they are coaches, this includes many coaches who pretend to be coaches, because in reality they don’t have the competencies nor have they received any courses.” Similar to in the United States, he pointed out that parents as coaches is not always the best situation for the child, especially if the parent is not qualified to coach the sport. He went on to reiterate the importance of familial support for young athletes. Coach 1 further emphasized this when he stated “[i]t is a different case between the ages of 14 and 18 where the assistance from their family representatives becomes much lower.” He said this while explaining that young athletes have a lot of support from their family (immediate and extended) whereas children over the age of 14 receive less. It is suspected that this is due to the competitive nature of the game in Venezuela; at 14 or 15 years old, an athlete will already know whether or not they will be receiving a baseball contract to play professionally

The Impact of Baseball Academies

While the number of MLB baseball academies in Venezuela has shrunk over the course of the last five years, private academies have grown in number. Many involved in baseball still

view academies as the main link to the MLB as well as other professional leagues around the world. One way that former players are helping the young athletes in Venezuela is by opening their own academies. Because they have a name for themselves as Venezuelan professional athletes, families trust them and MLB scouts know them as well. Academies also participate in acts of community service helping the poorest in their area or state.

Private baseball academies run by former Venezuelan MLB managers and players have become more popular. The psychologist stated, “they are run by elite, elite Venezuelan players that when they were big star back in the old days and now they invested most of their money in that type of business. For example, this academy that wants my services is called *Academia de Beisbol, Carlos Guillen*. Carlos Guillen was a big MLB player, I can’t recall which American team he played for, but he was very famous.” Coach 2 went on to say, “they [academies] are beneficial [for children] because they are trained professionals.” The importance of highly and specially trained baseball coaches is clearly an important part of youth baseball in Venezuela.

Coach 1 discussed why the MLB academies are leaving and why that is a bad thing. He says:

Today, there are only six MLB academies in Venezuela. At one point in history, there used to be more than 10 academies in our country. Political difficulties brought with it consequences including lack of funding due to the allocation of money and coupled with a series of political rumors, the majority of them emigrated from here. The bulk of these remain in the Dominican Republic. We are hoping in the future this is reversed. With the schools already in Venezuela, it makes it easier to praise the development of players close to your hometown.

Praise of their athletes is important to the Venezuelans as they have the highest passion for their homegrown talent, especially when that athlete makes it to a professional league elsewhere in the world.

In regards to former professional athletes and academies helping the community in their home state, the Broadcaster stated, “there is a foundation of former players that will sometimes give their time to the community and do various activities.” This point is further explained by the psychologist when he said, “in Venezuela lately there’s been this law that obligates enterprises from all types of businesses to have social responsibilities. What does that mean? It means that they have a sport clinic for a whole day with kids and they donate notebooks and pencils to schools, their taxes will decrease.” The work in the community allows those who may not be strong enough baseball players to be a part of the academies the opportunity to still work with former and current professional baseball players.

Character Building of Young Athletes

Sport inherently has the ability to teach young athletes valuable life lessons such as teamwork, loyalty, and perseverance. On top of that, in Venezuela, it helps keep kids off the street and learn the value of hard work an important lesson in a country plagued with violence. Teaching children valuable life lessons, especially at the young age in which they begin playing baseball, could lead to a more peaceful future for the country.

Coach 2 said, “[m]any youth participants in this discipline are able to occupy their time in these activities and it has been observed that it can serve as a medium to prevent drugs and assists with the formation of values of cooperation between teammates.” Coach 1 furthers this point when he said, “[f]or me, baseball is discipline. It formed a part of my life. Taught me to be responsible, competitive, just. Thanks to baseball, I understand that in life, sometimes you win

and sometimes you don't." The coaches reiterated the values they learned as athletes when they were children and continue to instill in the children they coach.

The broadcaster commented about the violence. He said, "here there is a lot of violence. But the sport helps people with tolerance. They watch and play the game and learn to be around people who are fans of different teams. The increased understanding of one another helps Venezuelans learn tolerance and respect for each other." This increase in respect and tolerance coupled with the other valuable lessons that sport teaches, can help lead to a calmer Venezuela in the future.

Summary of Social Implications of Baseball

Study participants described their perceptions of the social implications of baseball in Venezuela in three ways:

1. Increased social interaction;
2. Baseball academies as community enhancers; and
3. Baseball as a character builder in young athletes.

As it relates to increased social interaction, baseball is engrained in the everyday life of the Venezuelans. It is a way for friends and families to gather together and enjoy an event. All participants stated that they have had specific interactions with their friends and family because of the game as well as were fans of their team of choice due to their families. Baseball has also created slang terms and phrases in every day Venezuelan speech that relate to baseball.

In relation to the baseball academies, stakeholders stated that they benefit the community overall. Former professional baseball players have opened academies as the MLB run academies have left Venezuela due to the economic and political downturn of the last ten years. These private academies not only train the elite athletes within their area, but go into the

communities and help train athletes who may not be as good at the sport or able to afford all the equipment and therefore feel they cannot play. Baseball academies also promote school supply and equipment drives to help those in need. Stakeholders also attribute the baseball academies to the success of Venezuelan athletes in the professional leagues and the passion of the fans for their homegrown players.

In regards to character building, baseball has the opportunity to teach athletes values and morals that they may not always see off the field. Venezuela is a country with high levels of crime and violence, which is noted by multiple stakeholders. They discussed how the game helps teach the youth tolerance for others who may have different opinions and how to persevere through adversity. They also cite baseball as a way to keep children off the streets away from the violence, which hopefully allows them to not fall into the pattern some of their neighbors might.

Question #3: Economic Implications of Baseball in Venezuela

According to stakeholders, what are the major economic implications of hosting and promoting baseball in Venezuela?

Overview

Overall, study participants noted that baseball did not have a big effect on the economy in Venezuela. The two categories in which the study participants described the economic implications of baseball were (1) government control and (2) private academies and trainers. While all stakeholders discussed these two categories in their explanations of the economic impacts, they all approached the subjects very differently. It is important to note that all participants stated that it is difficult to talk about the economic impacts (whether beneficial or not) due to the fact that numbers are not released to the public by the government. They were

also all in agreement that the only economic benefit is to private businesses in regards to private academies and from taxes that are always collected by the government.

Government Control

In Venezuela, the government has sole ownership and control rights of the Venezuelan Professional Baseball League. It handles all sponsorships sold for events and does not allow private businesses or ownership groups to begin new teams.

In discussing the government's footprint on the league, the broadcaster stated, "[e]very team is managed by the government because they receive government resources. And more so, none of the venues where soccer, baseball and basketball are played, which are the major professional sports. Their stadiums are required to be rented from the government in order for them to play there." Coach 1 agreed by saying:

The impact of professional baseball is very small. The greatest benefit is the building of the stadiums as none of the professional teams have their own headquarters. All of them are requires to rent from the government, mayor, or whichever institution is responsible for the leasing of venues where professional teams play. The box office revenues are more or less divided between the home team and the property regulator.

Part of the government's control in the country revolves around its taxes. Even in areas where the government's influence is very little, such as amateur sports, the psychologist states "but like in every part of the world, they [the academies] pay taxes to the city council." Coach 2 reemphasized this point when he said "the government doesn't receive anything outside of the taxes imposed by the state." None of the revenues generated by the academies goes back to the government except for what the government claims in tax dollars.

Another interesting piece of the government's control is their desire to keep sponsorship dollar amounts private. The broadcaster said:

The economic impact is very bad. It's very little. It's very weak, the impact Venezuelan baseball has. Now, playing behind my back, as I have said, is the Homerun Derby for the regular season that is sponsored by Pepsi. Pepsi is one of the main sponsors of the league. But at the same time, no one know what the economic return Pepsi is making in the deal. I'll explain. We all know the Homerun Derby. But at the same time, we don't know how much Pepsi has invested for the rights to sponsor this event. The system here causes a lot of controversy because the economic theme talks of money which is a very sensitive issue here.

Private Baseball Academies and Trainers

With the MLB teams pulling their academies out of Venezuela, there has been an increase in the number of privately owned academies, which is how study participants agreed that athletes will be able to sign professional contracts. The issue comes into play when the ownership groups only care about the income they get from their athletes signing professional contracts. Trainers can be the same way. However, there was one differing opinion in relation to how people choose to spend their money and how it can be beneficial to the state's economy.

These issues were discussed by the psychologist when he said "[m]ost of the interest, I'll be honest, is money. Some of them are not interested in the development of the kid or the welfare of the parent, they just want the money." The private baseball money issue is further explained by Coach 2 as he said "[i]t has created many training facilities for private use. The coaches sign with a player and train them. Then when they sign, the athletes give them a

percentage of their contract. Generally, it covers 30 percent of the dollar amount, therefore, if a player signs for 100 thousand dollars, it corresponds to 30 thousand for the trainer.”

In addition, the psychologist states:

You have here in Venezuela, all over the country, baseball clubs and baseball schools. So when they begin to practice at the little league level, there are kids that begin to practice, that means money for the club. If they are good at their positions, some academies spot them and get them to practice with them. For example the academy that I “pretend” to work with gets the best players from clubs or the baseball schools and that means money for them. What is the role of the academy here specifically? As far as I know they are the link with the big teams from the US or the other countries I mentioned before. So talent scouts come from several of these organizations, especially from the MLB, to spot them. So that’s also money for them – for both organizations.

Despite the money he discusses the clubs make from their athletes, none of it is distributed throughout the community, and it stays in the academies amongst the owners and coaches, only in ways required to live or by the government – for example groceries, taxes, or rent.

Coach 1 discusses that amateur baseball benefits very little economically because:

Venezuela has dropped in the world ranking and their participation in international events has decreased or is less than expected is because Venezuela has become a country that exports all its player to the best leagues such as the MLB. The amateur players don’t have or enjoy social security because they are looking at the benefits of being a professional. Luck that many athletes do not have and it increases the unemployment in the country.

This emphasis on becoming a professional baseball player hurts youth in the long run because they do not focus on their education preventing them from starting a good career outside baseball.

However, Coach 1 discussed how baseball can be economically beneficial to the communities. He stated:

When there is a game, there are street vendors and every sporting space is transformed for the purpose of selling food and beverages. This is beneficial because they're already bringing commodities to the fans that are going to watch the game and they serve as refreshments for children who play. Now they must be controlled so that the benefits they gain thank to sports are shared with the organizations and the earnings are reciprocated. This happens in every stadium in every village, in every city, in every stadium in the country. Even sellers of sports equipment approach them with offers of easy payment, creating a commerce space where those who benefit are merchants who care little about having agreements with the organizers of events.

These street vendors are those who live in the communities where the games are being held.

The sales benefit them and their families.

Summary of Economic Implications of Baseball

Baseball stakeholders described their perceptions of the economic implications of baseball in Venezuela in two ways. They were:

1. Government control; and
2. Private baseball academies and trainers.

In regards to government control, the Venezuelan government, like many countries, imposes taxes on the entities they cannot control. However, those they can, such as the Venezuelan Professional Baseball League, control it all. Examples include not disclosing how much sponsors, such as Pepsi, pay in their contract and splitting the revenues from merchandise and ticket sales with the teams. Teams cannot be owned by private enterprises and, for this reason, they receive government funding that keeps them in compliance with the government's rules for the league.

As it relates to private baseball academies and trainers, all the money brought in by contracts and participation stays within the academy or with the trainer. Outside of the taxes collected by government, little of the money is put back into the communities. While there are a few instances in which the community benefits, most of the money goes back to the government in the form of normal taxes or the private instructors and academies. The idea of bettering oneself economically as a professional athlete also sets back many youth as they stop focusing on their studies and solely focus on baseball.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to understand the social and economic impacts of baseball in Venezuela. More specifically, study participants were asked to describe and define baseball in Venezuela and then explain the economic and social impacts of baseball in their country through a series of specific questions.

In analyzing the results, study participants were more willing to discuss baseball's meaning and social impact on their life than the economic. Many stated that the financials of the Venezuelan Professional Baseball League were kept private for government use only. They also reiterated many expected points such as baseball being the national pastime of Venezuela and that all members of society follow the news and the current information about it.

Every one of the study participants stated that baseball is the national pastime of Venezuela. They all made sure to state this because it is a very important part of their history as an independent country as well as a big part of their everyday life. Study participants also indicated that baseball was instrumental in teaching young males important life lessons about respect and tolerance.

Study participants strongly emphasized that baseball was engrained in Venezuelan life. Examples of how baseball has become a part of daily life in Venezuela included conversations with friends and family as well as slang terms used in everyday language. Every participant in the study stated that they had spent more social time with friends and family due to watching or discussing baseball. Whether they were watching the game at one of their homes or in person at

the stadium, they all stated they enjoyed and cherished the time they can spend with their family watching the game. The psychologist discussed how he spent time with his uncle watching the playoffs – time he would have spent doing something else that was not with his family.

In regards to slang terms used in everyday language, study participants discussed phrases such as “struck out” and “hit a home run” that relate, respectively, to something that did not go according to plan and to something that went exceptionally well. Other phrases have been conceived that are also used in the English language such as “you’re in a pickle” or “swing and a miss.” An interesting piece in relation to the phrases is that study participants indicated that children learn them from a young age reiterating how young children start learning the game and participating in it.

Baseball also helps teach children about living a healthy lifestyle. Coach 1 discussed the increase of video games in the daily lives of children and how the street games of baseball and other created street games keep children healthy and outside. Similar to what Lee, Cornwell, and Babiak (2013) discuss about the positive social impact sports have on teaching children how to be healthy in their lives, study participants state that many young boys play baseball in their youth and move into softball to continue participating in sport in their adulthood.

As stated by Howes (2011), in the United States, community involvement is a large part of the baseball academies and professional teams in Venezuela. They help their communities by putting on free clinics to help underprivileged youth learn the skills to improve their play. The academies and teams also have food and other drives that raise money and collect items such as school supplies to help those who may not be able to afford to purchase these materials that are necessary for everyday life.

As expected, study participants indicated that the academies are the link to the MLB and other professional leagues. Most study participants stated that this was one of the few economic benefits to baseball in Venezuela. Due to the hidden nature of the cost of sponsorships. It is easy for the community members to know the impact of the salary of a professional baseball player since contract terms are often public and citizens can figure out the taxes that will be paid back to the government.

Outside of professional contracts, the economic benefits of baseball in Venezuela are either privatized or unknown. In terms of privatized benefits, the owners and instructors at baseball academies make all of the money associated with contracts of their athletes and cost of participation in the academy. Private instructors are the same, with Coach 2 stating that approximately 30 percent of the value of a player's contract goes back to the private coach. Much of the money is put back into the academies, but the rest is kept for personal use instead of recirculated back into the communities.

With the government having control and fiscal rights to the venues and the Venezuelan Professional Baseball League, revenues and losses are unknown. The government does not share this information with the public. Unlike in the United States, when a company signs a sponsorship agreement with the league, the government keeps the dollar figure secret and does not tell the public what the sponsor invest. For example, Pepsi is the prime sponsor of the home run derby; yet the amount they pay and the rights they are given as the title sponsor are unknown. Private ownership groups also cannot purchase a team and run it; all teams are run by the government, who provides the money to fund the teams each year.

Conclusions

This study exemplifies the struggles of working with others from other countries, especially those in political and economic hardship. These struggles include consistent communication with potential study participants, willingness to participate, and quality internet connection to facilitate the Skype interview. Studies like this are important to the future of sports, especially those that are international such as baseball, soccer, and basketball, to avoid children being exploited for their athletic talent. The findings in the background and social impact sections of the study follow the findings in the literature review, whereas the economic impact portion does not support or deny the claims made in the literature review. Rather, it provides the unique case of the economy in Venezuela.

In regards to willingness to participate, there were two participants who stated they would be interviewed for this study, but they never confirmed a date or time despite multiple follow ups. This severely decreased the number of interviews that took place. Originally, eight interviews were to be conducted; in the end, only four were due to lack of participation from contacts and unwillingness to share contacts that were originally expected.

Future research on this topic could be done in a number of ways. Most practically would be to go to Venezuela to interact with athletes and their families as well as observing the baseball culture at a professional and amateur game. A quantitative survey could also be created to distribute while there. Another interesting avenue, though much more complicated, would be to interact with the Venezuelan athletes in the MLB and MiLB to get their stories on their success. However, no matter what the opportunity, it is paramount that research is continued to better understand how athletes from troubled countries get noticed by scouts and

have the opportunity to leave, as well as how the major sports in each country affect the daily life and economy of the country.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Background

1. Tell me about yourself and your current role in baseball.
2. How long have you been involved with baseball and how did you get started?
3. Describe your family's involvement in baseball.
4. Describe what the game of baseball means to you.
5. What other activities do you participate in outside of baseball?
6. If you were not actively involved in baseball, what would you be doing professionally?

Economic

1. What type of economic impact does baseball have in Venezuela?
2. Who benefits most from the economic impact of baseball in Venezuela and why?
3. Are there any negative economic impacts associated with baseball in Venezuela? If so what are they and who do they effect?
4. What role does the government play in growing and promoting baseball in Venezuela?
5. How are cities and towns economically impacted by baseball?
6. When stadiums and fields are built, how are they funded? Is that the best way to do business in your professional opinion and why do you feel this way?

7. Do you think that the MLB and private businesses have been good for baseball in Venezuela?

Social

1. What type of impact does baseball have on the community in terms of quality of life for citizens?
2. How do you think the community interacts with baseball?
3. How does baseball help promote community unity in Venezuela if at all?
4. What role does the government play in developing communities through baseball?
5. Please explain the impact on children that baseball has.
6. How important is baseball to the Venezuelan people? Do you have any examples to further your opinion?
7. If baseball were eliminated from Venezuelan life, what would the impact be for citizens?

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BIOGRAPHY

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