CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN PROFESSIONAL SPORT:
INVESTIGATING PARTNERSHIPS AND THE DESIRE FOR AUTHENTICITY

by

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Sport and Recreation Studies at George Mason University

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List of Abbreviations

Corporate social responsibility .... CSR
Professional sport organization.. PSO
Public relations..PR
Sport corporate social responsibility..SCSR
Cause-related marketing ....CRM
Cause-related sport marketing .... CRSM
National Football Association...NFL
National Basketball Association .... NBA
Major League Baseball ....MLB

Abstract

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George Mason University, 2016

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The increasing focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in sport indicates its
growing influence on brand, organizational structure and fulfillment of stakeholder needs.
The purpose of this mixed-methods study was two-fold: to investigate professional sport
organizations' (PSO) perceptions of their CSR partnerships and to examine the concept
of authenticity as it may relate to such social responsibility efforts. Findings indicated
that the PSO respondents feel favorably toward their current CSR partnership efforts
wherein philanthropic and ethical social responsibilities have a greater impact over
economic and legal duties, and work to incorporate perceived elements of authenticity
(i.e., passion, collaboration, consistency) into these relationships. A low response rate
limits the ability to generalize results to the larger population, but the research does help
to unpack notions of authenticity as well as highlight external and internal priorities that
may help serve as a road map for PSOs that desire to be influential and genuine partners.

Keywords: sport, corporate social responsibility, partnership, authentic

Chapter One: Overview of the Study

Milton Friedman (1970) wrote an essay for *New York Times Magazine* in which he espoused the importance of shareholder theory, proposing that a business' sole responsibility is to increase profits and thus only be concerned with shareholder interests. However, some modern corporations have taken a different stance wherein they acknowledge stakeholders who demand a certain degree of social accountability on the part of businesses and their actions. Corporate social initiatives might have the ability to make a positive impact on brand advancement and consumer perception, but it is still to be debated whether corporate social responsibility (CSR), or rather the "double bottom line," should be a core organizational focus. Overall, the concept of CSR seems to sit in direct opposition to Friedman's opinion, as it employs the belief that it is the "responsibility of organizations to be ethical and accountable to the needs of their society as well as to their stakeholders" (Bradish & Cronin, 2009).

The implementation of CSR initiatives by professional sport organizations (PSOs) has become increasingly central to their brand positioning, their organizational structure and the perceived needs of their stakeholders. After all, sports are unique in that they provide a platform to unite diverse communities, bridge cultures, and raise awareness for a multitude of issues such as health and wellness, gender equality, disability, and more. Sport can be used to accomplish a number of goals, whether as an instrument of soft

power for the purposes of foreign diplomacy or as a tool to improve the community and the environment as a whole. Due to the popularity of integrating social initiatives into business practices, there has been an upsurge in research surrounding CSR in the sports industry. While this topic of study is relatively young, it has become a necessary focus as PSOs and athletes are placed into the spotlight, often pressed to take accountability through policies and programming in order to address certain issues of concern such as domestic violence and the illegal use of performance-enhancing drugs.

Previous research on CSR in sport is somewhat broad but it has helped to compile detailed accounts of current efforts on the part of leagues, teams and individual athletes. In other words, recent studies have helped to produce a "theoretical foundation and practical orientation of CSR for sport researchers and managers" (Bradish & Cronin, 2009). Areas of focus have included topics such as the rise of CSR in sport, organizational perception and definitions of CSR, consumer attitudes and beliefs, implementation and effects of cause-related marketing, integration into the local community, and international development initiatives. However, it is important to note that CSR in the sport industry is not always practiced alone. Sport organizations often partner with other entities (i.e., non-profits, local governments, corporate sponsors) in order to fulfill goals such as raising awareness for a particular social or cultural issue and/or performing community outreach. What is more is that sport executives acknowledge the importance of collaborations that can be perceived as genuine, rather than those that are simply initiated for the sake of exposure. Partnerships are indeed vital to the implementation of CSR in sport and deserve deeper inquiry, especially when it

comes to examining the leagues' perceptions of authenticity and its relationship to CSR programming.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the integration of partnerships into PSOs' CSR as a means of achieving successful programming and to define the role of "authenticity" within such collaborations. The hope is that this research will provide insight into the managerial thought-process of identifying and implementing partnerships as they relate to CSR, and ultimately lend a greater understanding as to how these partnerships can help to fulfill the social responsibilities of PSOs.

While Sheth and Babiak (2010) identified partnerships as a key priority in sport executive's conceptions of CSR, the following research seeks to take their findings a step further. This mixed methods study will utilize qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys in order to gather information as it relates to PSO employees' attitudes toward partnership in CSR. It will also aid in constructing a general framework toward employing partnerships as a tool to achieve positive levels of CSR. Archie B. Carroll's (1979, 1991) three-dimensional model of corporate social performance and pyramid of CSR will both serve as a foundation for the literature review which explores the unique quality of sport as it relates to CSR and the key strategies associated with such initiatives. These models will also be applied to the results of this study in order to examine the degree to which league CSR partnerships help fulfill the requirements of social responsibility. Overall, the research seeks to determine the role that partnership plays when implementing successful CSR activities in a variety of PSOs as well as better understand the importance of integrating authenticity into CSR partnerships.
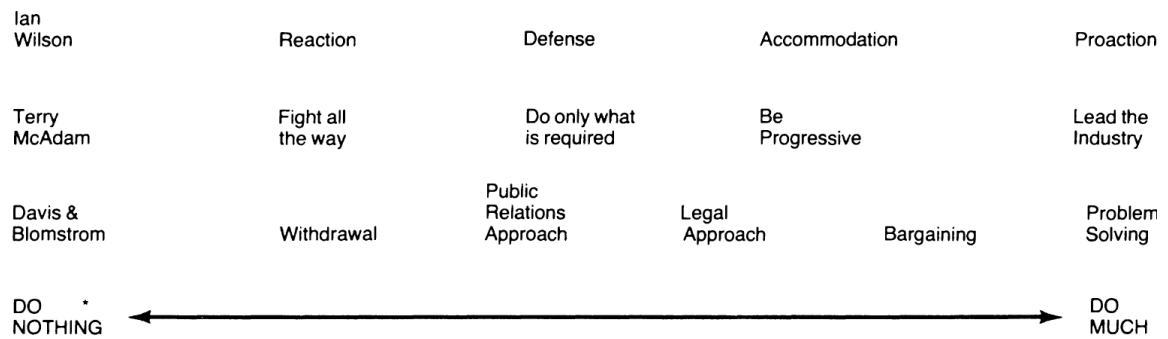
<center>**Chapter Two: Literature Review**</center>

The Research of Archie B. Carroll

      A three-dimensional model of corporate social performance. In order to address the concept of CSR in sport, one must first investigate the literature that addresses the perceived social responsibility of businesses as well as the type and degree of their response to social issues. For the purposes of this paper, this section will focus upon the research of Archie B. Carroll in order to create a foundation upon which to understand CSR and corporate/managerial activity. While Howard R. Bowen's 1953 publication of *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* helped earn him the title 'father of corporate social responsibility,' it is Carroll who sought to analyze the definitions, social issues, and philosophies/modes of responsiveness that are associated with CSR and subsequently categorize them into a three-dimensional social performance model. First, Carroll (1979) compiled the various definitions of CSR into four distinct areas of social responsibility: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary. With this in mind, Carroll (1979) went on to suggest a more comprehensive definition of CSR: "The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time" (p. 500). These social responsibilities will be elaborated upon during the discussion of Carroll's (1991)

<center>4</center>

pyramid of CSR and his resulting argument surrounding the management of organizational stakeholders.

Once the main components included in CSR have been addressed, Carroll (1979) then explored the particular social issues that must be addressed by an organization. He conceded that while issues such as consumerism, the environment, employment discrimination, product safety, occupational safety, and shareholders have "evolved under the rubric of social responsibility," their constant "state of flux" makes it impossible to determine the exact kinds of issues that may arise as well as the required amount of corporate interest and attention (Carroll, 1979, p. 501). This is in large part due to the reality that not only do issues change over time, but they also differ depending on the industry (Carroll, 1979).

To complete the three-dimensional model, Carroll (1979) analyzed the final component of a business' philosophy, mode, or strategy behind its CSR activities, otherwise known as *social responsiveness*. The continuum in Figure 1 reinforces Carroll's (1979) note that social responsiveness' ranges on a continuum from no response ("do nothing") to proactive response ("do much") and illustrates how other scholars such as Ian Wilson and Terry McAdam have effectively described these extremes in their work (p. 502). Overall, Carroll (1979) deemed corporate social responsiveness as the "action phase of management" that allows "organizations to act on their social responsibilities without getting bogged down in the quagmire of definitional problems" (Carroll, 1979, p. 502).

Ian Wilson	Reaction	Defense	Accommodation	Proaction
Terry McAdam	Fight all the way	Do only what is required	Be Progressive	Lead the Industry
Davis & Blomstrom	Withdrawal	Public Relations Approach	Legal Approach	Bargaining	Problem Solving

DO NOTHING ⟵————————————————————⟶ DO MUCH

Figure 1. Social Responsiveness Categories. Reprinted from "A Three-Dimensional Conceptual Model of Corporate Performance," by A. Carroll, 1979, *The Academy of Management Review*, *4*(4), p. 502.

The three-dimensional model of corporate social performance is displayed in Figure 2. Carroll (1979) believed that both academics and managers can utilize this model to their benefit; the former can gain a better understanding as to the definitions and issues that accompany CSR, whereas the latter can learn to adapt their responsiveness to social issues in a more efficient manner.

PHILOSOPHY
OF
SOCIAL
RESPONSIVENESS

Proaction
Accommo-
dation
Defense
Reaction

Discretionary
Responsibilities

Ethical
Responsibilities

SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY
CATEGORIES

Legal
Responsibilities

Economic
Responsibilities

Consum- Environ- Discrim- Product Occupa- Share-
erism ment ination Safety tional holders
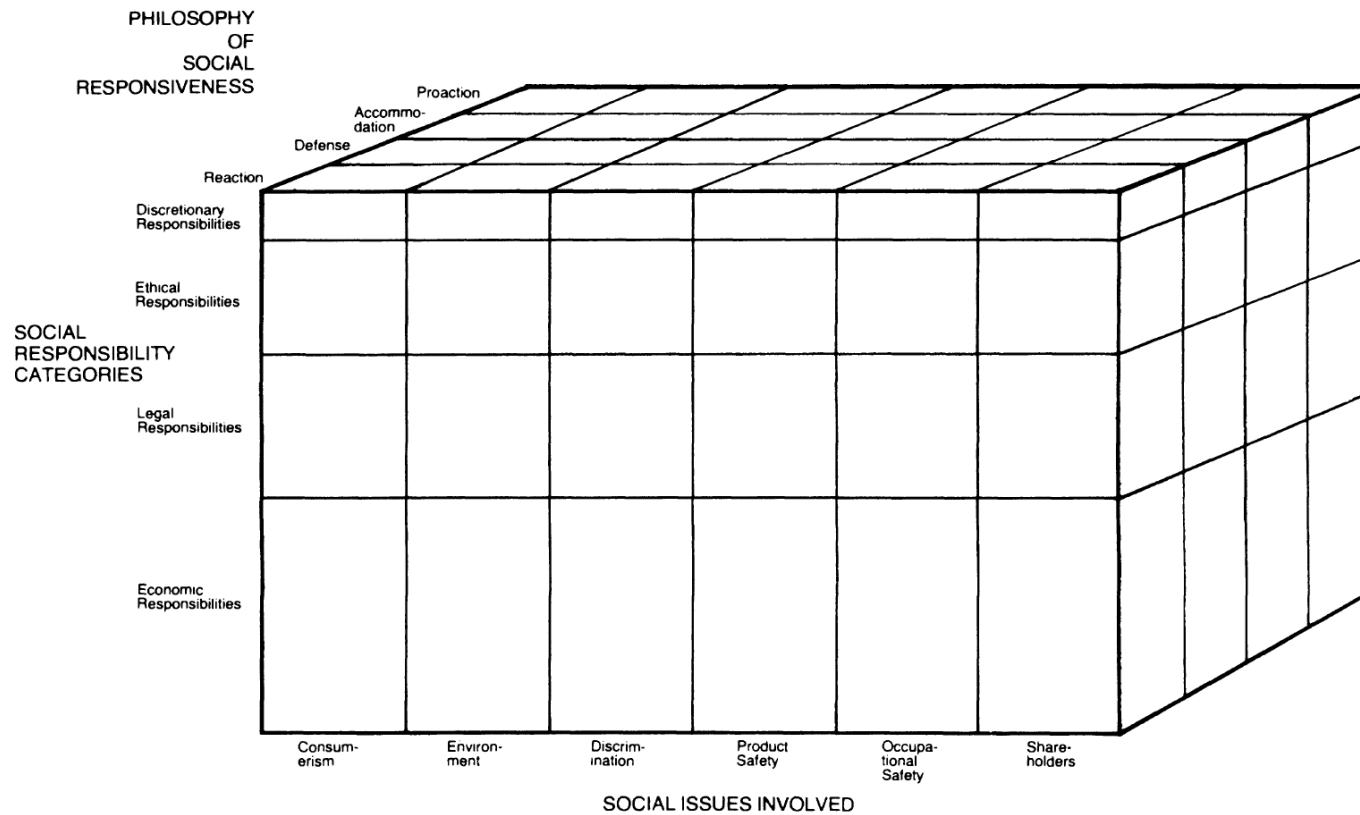   Safety

SOCIAL ISSUES INVOLVED

Figure 2. The Corporate Social Performance Model. Reprinted from "A Three-Dimensional Conceptual Model of Corporate Performance," by A. Carroll, 1979, *The Academy of Management Review*, *4*(4), p. 503.

The CSR pyramid. Carroll (1991) later built upon his categories of social responsibility by incorporating them into a pyramid model, essentially creating a framework within which to understand the necessary motivations and the "the evolving nature" of a business's CSR performance (p. 47). It is important to note that his earlier concept of "discretionary responsibilities" is now described as "philanthropic responsibilities" (Carroll, 1979, 1991). As seen in Figure 3, economic responsibilities are considered the foundation of a business's social responsibilities and require that the entity make a profit and remain both competitive and efficient (Carroll, 1991). Legal responsibilities are situated on the next level of the pyramid, stating that a business "must comply with all laws and regulations promulgated by federal, state, and local governments" (Carroll, 1991, p. 41). The last two levels of the pyramid are distinct from first two as they are less concerned with required necessities (i.e., profit and adherence to the rules) and more concerned with social expectations and desires. Carroll (1991) viewed ethical responsibilities as the "standards, norms, or expectations" held by stakeholders as they relate to what is considered socially just (p. 41). Finally, philanthropic responsibilities demand that a corporation voluntarily engage "in acts or programs to promote human welfare or goodwill" (Carroll, 1991, p. 42).
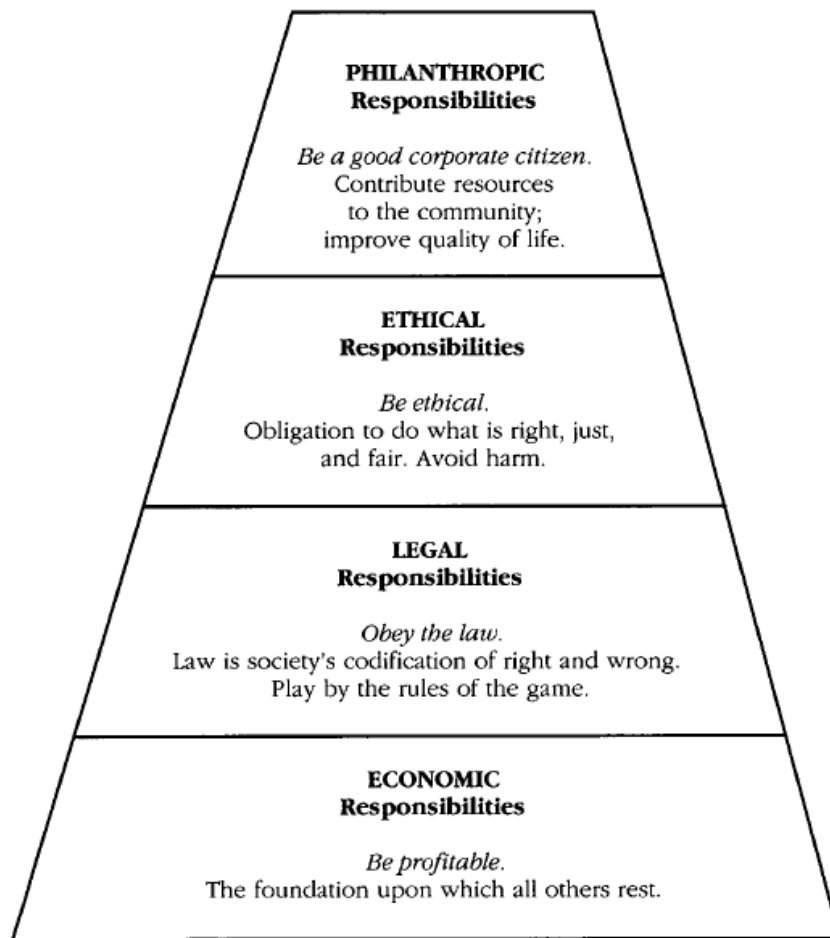
Figure 3. The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility. Reprinted from "The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: Toward the moral management of organizational stakeholders," by A. Carroll, 1991, *Business Horizons*, *34*(4), p. 42.

A key theme to be found throughout the pyramid of CSR is the concept of the stakeholder, which encompasses the individuals or groups that will find themselves affected by a corporation's management of their social responsibilities. According to Carroll (1991), stakeholders can include owners, customers, employees, community,

competitors, suppliers, social activist groups, and even the public at large. Carroll (1991) suggested that not only must a business's management be strategic in determining the kinds of social responsibilities it has toward its particular stakeholders, but it must also aspire to employ moral management (rather than immoral or amoral) to successfully address the needs of such stakeholders. Viewed within the realm of ethical responsibility, moral managers are leaders who embrace a "high standard of right behavior" and "want to be profitable, but only within the confines of sound legal and ethical precepts" (Carroll, 1991, p. 45).

The Social Responsibility of Sport

  Sport as a social institution. Sport has long been known as a universal language and if properly managed, it can educate, unite, and empower. Sports are central to our culture and the contemporary world, motivating scholars such as Robert Redeker (2008) to equate sports fanaticism with religious fanaticism. Sociologists enjoy analyzing the institution of sport as it is characterized by regulation, formalization, ideological justification and the transmission of culture (Delaney & Madigan, 2015, p. 9). On a grander scale, sport is acknowledged as "a pervasive social institution" because it consistently reinforces values and myths that are central to society at large (Delaney & Madigan, 2015, p. 3). In their book *The Sociology of Sports*, Tim Delaney and Tim Madigan (2015) have elaborated,

    Athletic contests are important to the socialization of youth, to the integration of

    disparate groups and social classes, to physical and mental well-being, and to the

    enhancement of community pride. (p. 3)

The growing institutionalization of CSR in sport demonstrates the inherent connection between society, culture and sport. Godfrey (2009) recognized that sport is indeed a social institution. It is a fixture of social life, continually inspiring new words/meanings (e.g., *Olympism*) and even presenting "a mechanism to legitimize political and economic systems" (Godfrey, 2009, p. 699). Still, CSR in sport can occasionally be perceived in a negative light. In other words, some critics may view CSR as an apology or a way in which to counteract social harms. Richard Giulianotti (2015) acknowledged that organizations might find themselves benefitting from positive public relations (PR) releases and/or activations that highlight their support of a particular issue or cause. The NFL has recently received similar criticism over their handling of domestic violence issues, whereas the MLB has historically faced media attention regarding their drug policy. However, there appears to be definite value in encouraging the leagues (and other organizations outside of the sports realm) to utilize a more critical approach with CSR. Inquiring as to whether CSR is simply an invention of the PR world, Peter Frankental (2001) argued that this kind of organizational action is only meaningful if it abides by a certain checklist:

> CSR can only have real substance if it embraces all the stakeholders of a company, if it is reinforced by changes in company law relating to governance, if it is rewarded by financial markets, if its definition relates to the goals of social and ecological sustainability, if its implementation is benchmarked and audited, if it is open to public scrutiny, if the compliance mechanisms are in place, and if it is embedded across the organization horizontally and vertically. (p. 23)

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Promisingly, there are also supporters who believe CSR allows corporations to promote their values and utilize their "favored institutional status" to support social causes and improve quality of life (Godfrey, 2009, p. 699). The origins of corporate philanthropy date back to the 19th century, and so does the debate in which it is questioned whether managers are beholden to the shareholders or the public at large (Godfrey, 2009). Most importantly, Godfrey (2009) observed the ability of sport to address a variety of social by framing it within W.R. Scott's three pillars of institutions: sport can be a *cognitive*, a *regulative*, and a *normative* institution, allowing it to shape our views about the world, create and enforce social regulations, and promote a notion of what is fair and right. While participation in CSR certainly helps to endorse a firm's double bottom-line, the power and popularity of sports entities may also assist in providing a sense of legitimacy to the concept of CSR. For instance, Frey and Eitzen (1991) recognized sport as "a microcosm of society" and stress its capacity to reflect a great deal of engrained social behaviors, structures and relationships that we experience in everyday life (p. 504). Thus, one might suppose that PSOs have a distinctive ability to bridge the gap between the commercial and public worlds. In Frey and Eitzen's (1991) words, "no other activity so paradoxically combines the serious with the frivolous, playfulness with intensity, and the ideological with the structural" (p. 504).

Sport as unique to CSR. Smith and Westerbeek (2007) explored sport's inherent ability to be used as a vehicle for deploying CSR. As an influencer of society, sport is saturated with a variety of social responsibilities including instituting rules of fair play (e.g., equality, access and diversity), ensuring the safety and protection of participants

and spectators, protecting the independence of playing outcomes, implementing transparency of governance, creation of pathways for playing and development, maintaining relationships with the community and its needs, improving opportunities for health and physical activity, promoting environmental protection and sustainability, committing to the physical, social and personal development of participants, and providing qualified coaching (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007, pp. 5-6). These social responsibilities help to serve as a checklist with which to identify appropriate areas for CSR initiatives (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Additionally, a deeper investigation into the unique features of sport CSR reveals a wide scope, including mass media distribution and communication power, youth appeal, positive health impacts, social interaction, sustainability awareness, cultural understanding and integration, immediate gratification benefits (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Still, one might inquire as to the treatment of such partnerships and resulting programs. Touching specifically upon sport corporate social responsibility (SCSR), Smith and Westerbeek (2007) argued, "The wrong messages can also be propagated if SCSR is handled poorly," using the sensitive topic of globalization and backlash against the Olympics movement as an example (p. 10).

On a similar note, Babiak and Wolfe (2009) identified unique characteristics of North American professional sport that assist in the implementation, design and impact of CSR. For instance, the teams generate a great deal of passion and interest amongst fans and consumers, thus providing a captive audience with which to implement CSR (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). The PSO economic structure also encourages the industry to "provide social benefit and give back to the community," while the element of transparency with

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athletes and business dealings often place management under intense scrutiny to

acknowledge through social responsibility programs (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009, p. 722).

Passion, economics, and transparency add to the last element of stakeholder management,

wherein professional sport is forced to juggle relationships with a complex set of

organizations such as the media, fans, government, and more (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009).

Key Strategies Associated With CSR in Sport

      Consumer perception. The consumer can be a powerful motivator toward the

implementation of CSR initiatives. Stakeholders, especially the general public, expect

today's businesses to place corporate citizenship as a much higher priority (Lewis, 2003).

In a qualitative study of stakeholder management in the UK football industry, Tacon and

Walters (2010) found that the loyalty of customers is highly relevant to UK football

executives as this stakeholder attitude often translates "into financial and practical

support for the club" (p. 575). Furthermore, UK football management views the supporter

as a key stakeholder, and in order to gain their trust and patronage, the clubs often take a

comprehensive approach by implementing an inclusive ticket pricing system and

providing transportation on game day (Tacon & Walters, 2010).

      In assessing the influence of CSR on consumer attitude, Walker and Kent (2009)

utilized a mixed-design study to examine this relationship and answer the question, "Do

fans care?" The results from the fan-base of two NFL teams suggest CSR positively

affects the consumer's perception and support of the organization (Walker & Kent,

2009). The fans "generally valued the socially responsible efforts of the team,"

illustrating that even though they were not aware of all of the team's CSR programming,

they still appreciated these activities and perceived the team in a strong and positive light (Walker & Kent, 2009, p. 758).

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a key component of CSR that allows firms to "link the promotion of their product to a social cause and contribute a share of the revenues to the cause" (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006). Recently, the NFL has utilized CRM by partnering with No More, a non-profit project that seeks to raise awareness for domestic violence. Lachowetz and Gladden (2003) took this concept a step further as they investigated the necessary framework for managing cause-related sport marketing (CRSM) initiatives. Overall, the intended outcomes of CRSM include an improvement in the perception of the sport organization/firm, enhanced consumer loyalty, and re-allocation of consumer expenditures which is otherwise known as consumer brand switching (Lachowetz & Gladden, 2003, p. 326). It is important to note that the integration of CRM must be approached strategically as the consumer tends to respond more favorably to campaigns that are perceived as genuine and legitimate (Irwin et al., 2003). The recent example of criticism surrounding the NFL's partnership with No More, a non-profit campaign devoted to raising awareness for domestic violence, proves how easily the consumer can perceive these initiatives as disingenuous or non-solutions.

Community impact. CSR in sport often features the surrounding community in a variety of ways. From health and wellness to environmental sustainability, the contribution of sport organizations' resources to the community is a key strategy toward social responsibility. As institutions of sport are no stranger to public criticism surrounding their internal and external pursuits, coupling CSR with activities such as

large sporting events has been known to help to combat this kind of criticism through programs that give back to the community through improvements in education, cultural and social programming, philanthropy and infrastructure (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006).

Different sport organizations will vary in terms of impact due to a number of variables. In an effort to investigate how CSR differs in terms of type, scope, direction and target audiences, Walker and Parent (2010) argued that geographical reach, stakeholder influences, and business operations would contribute to this difference. Interestingly, Walker and Parent (2010) noticed that there is a trend amongst sport organizations to imitate CSR strategies, placing "green" and sustainability initiatives at the top of the list. Evidence indicates that professional sport has leaned toward environmental sustainability CSR programs due to "scrutiny and regulation, and normative and associative pressures" (Trendafilova, Babiak, & Heinze, 2013, p. 309). As these drivers are often intensified through the lens of the media, environment sustainability programs are expected now more than ever and ultimately contribute to the legitimacy of the sport organizations' CSR (Trendafilova et al., 2013). In general, different levels of the sport industry have the ability to make an impact in their own way. PSOs like the NBA (e.g., *Hoops for Troops*) and NFL (e.g., *Play 60*) institute league wide CSR initiatives, along with teams and franchises that target local issues within their community (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006). Even individual athletes like Peyton Manning and Charles Tillman found their own charities and implement philanthropic campaigns to address social issues (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006).

The notion of community is not just local but also global. CSR programs as sport through development are not unheard of and frequently launch in conjunction with large sporting events like the World Cup or even through sport-related companies like Nike's Girl Effect campaign. Sport is especially useful for the deployment of CSR for development as it has the ability to impact ignored or marginalized communities such as youth and girls/women (Levermore, 2010). Certain limitations apply to such initiatives as a 'top-down' power structure between the first and developing worlds may promote a donor-centric initiative rather than programming that is truly tailored to the needs of the community (Levermore, 2010). Drawing on postcolonial feminist IR theory, McHayhurst (2011) further explored programs like Girl Effect and argued that while sport participation helps to empower and advance the skills of women and girls, CSR initiatives tend to "ignore gender as a relational category by framing girls as having gendered identities that need to be augmented or changed (through sport)" (p. 534). Globalization is an increasingly relevant topic for the sport industry and more research is required to investigate the strategy and resulting impact of their global CSR efforts.

Partnership. Partnership is a necessity for CSR in sport, allowing for organizations to perform outreach to communities on a variety of issues. In a study focused on sport executives' views toward their league's CSR activities, Sheth and Babiak (2010) identified partnership (among philanthropic, community, strategic, leadership, ethical, legal and stakeholders) as a key theme reported in their interviews:

> The purpose of CSR is not only to donate funds and in-kind items to the local
> community, but it is also to partner with other organizations for the betterment of

the entire community and build strong networks within that community. (Sheth &

Babiak, 2010, p. 445)

Teams want to be viewed as a partner in addressing social issues and use CSR to build

supportive networks (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). At their core, partnerships can be beneficial

as they are collaborative and allow sport organizations to tap the expert knowledge of

other groups (e.g., non-profits, community organizations) who work closely with a

particular issue. In addition, Babiak and Wolfe (2009) posited, "interconnectedness

among organizations in the professional sport organizational field (e.g., teams, municipal

and state governments, the media, advertisers, sponsors) is very strong, thus contributing

to the increasing emphasis on community outreach efforts" (p. 728).

A case study of the Detroit Lions revealed that they work with key community

groups to help target the city's needs, which is a successful example of how other sport

organizations can leverage partnerships to match their resources with the areas and issues

of greatest need (Heinze, Soderstrom, & Zdroik, 2014). Subsequently, strategic alliances

often work as a motivator to address certain issues in sport, especially environmental

CSR. Babiak and Trendafilova (2011) found that partnerships aimed toward

environmental initiatives not only provided the PSOs with additional knowledge and

insight, but they also assisted with increased operational efficiency and financial

opportunities via corporate sponsors. In terms of perceived benefits, Walters and Panton

(2014) determined that the concept of partnership is understood in different ways

depending on the partner in question. Whereas professional football clubs take self-

interest into account before social concern, the Community Sports Trust (i.e., a charitable

organization) views the alliance as a way to primarily address social issues (Walters & Panton, 2014).

Concerning the sustaining of CSR partnerships, Heinze et al. (2014) established the following key themes based off of the Detroit Lion's success: approach partnerships with respect and humility, enable and assist rather than impose or act self-serving, engage in an authentic manner, create mutually beneficial goals, and act as a broker to connect other organizations toward the betterment of the community. Inoue, Mahan, and Kent (2013) have found that philanthropic partnerships between PSOs and nonprofits can benefit both parties as they have the ability to garner donation behavior from a wide range of fans as well as reinforce the organization's reputation with the consumer. Furthermore, the success of a PSO positively correlates with increased donations to a nonprofit, thus implying "that aligning with strong and successful sport brands could be vital to the prosperity of nonprofit organizations" (Inoue et al., 2013, p. 322).

Authenticity. Firms often emphasize the need for authenticity within their CSR initiatives, but why? Beverland stated that authenticity implies a sense of "truthfulness, facts, honesty, genuineness, trustworthiness, and actuality" (as cited in Beckman, Colwell, & Cunningham, 2009, p. 199). As briefly mentioned in the section on partnerships, authenticity plays a key role in philanthropic collaboration between PSOs and nonprofits (Heinze et al., 2014). While it is indeed an important factor in CSR, authenticity has not yet been widely studied. Heinze et al. (2014) sought to contribute to the literature by shining light on the success of the Detroit Lions' CSR and providing a framework within which PSOs can "engage more systematically and genuinely in

community development" (p. 674). Elizabeth Parkinson, the Lion's Senior Vice President of Marketing and Partnerships, participated in the study and responded as follows on the topic of authenticity and relationships with community partners: "It's not just providing [partners] funding but how are we integrated into what they're doing" (Heinze et al., 2014, p. 681). Authentic CSR appears to focus less on money and more on sincere programs that make sense to the organization, the cause, and the consumer. According to Beckman et al. (2009), genuine CSR must demonstrate ethical values, commitment, passion and action toward the cause and core principles of CSR, as well as the potential impact on stakeholders.

On the other hand, the inability to demonstrate authenticity within CSR initiatives can prove disadvantageous to a PSO's reputation. In a study considering the impact of the NBA Cares program on player image, Giannoulakis and Drayer (2009) determined that while this particular CSR initiative improved consumers' perceptions of participating players, questions still remained surrounding the authenticity of the overall program. It was revealed that the NBA Cares program was implemented only a few short months after the Pacers-Pistons brawl in 2004, thus fueling the skepticism as well as allegations of a cover-up for negative portrayals of the players (Giannoulakis & Drayer, 2009). For example, one respondent answered, "If it was meant to be real the program should have been there before the brawl. Someone was trying to cover themselves" (Giannoulakis & Drayer, 2009, p. 464). Essentially, the promotion and perceived sentiment behind PSOs' CSR is equally as important as the highlighted issue or cause.

Synthesis of Literature

  The increasing popularity and institutionalization of CSR in professional sport will hopefully encourage more in-depth analysis and research on its managerial processes, implementation and impact. Thankfully, PSOs can reference previous frameworks and conceptual models, such as Carroll's (1979, 1991) three-dimensional model of corporate social performance and CSR pyramid, in order to better structure their CSR, target appropriate causes, and identify best practices for response and implementation. Carroll's framework greatly contributes to the understanding and application of CSR by highlighting four key areas of social responsibility: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary/philanthropic responsibilities (Carroll, 1991). In other words, firms are responsible for making a profit, obeying the law, adhering to social values and expectations, and going beyond those expectations to make the world a better place. Carroll's conceptual models not only speak to the complexity involved in the comprehension and handling of CSR, but they also provide a solid foundation upon which the social responsibility of sport is visible and key strategies are illuminated. While Carroll's framework was derived from the process of compiling previous scholarly definitions and conceptualizations of CSR, today's research (including this study) has sought to further expose firms' perceptions of CSR and associated strategies.

  As a social institution, sport has the ability to create and reinforce culture while fulfilling societal needs. It educates participants and spectators alike on basic social values such as respect, hard work, and sportsmanship, and often reflects societal issues such as gender equity, racism, and international relations. Consequently, sport is a natural

tool through which to perform CSR as the needs and expectations of organizational stakeholders is indeed a social concern. Similar to Carroll's (1979) three-dimensional model of corporate social performance, Smith and Westerbeek's (2007) list of sport's social responsibilities can help PSOs to identify strategic and genuine opportunities for their CSR programs. Furthermore, sport is gifted with many unique qualities that can assist in the success of CSR, such as access to mass media, youth appeal, attention toward health, wellness and sustainability, and cultural acceptance. Not surprisingly, the key strategies of sport CSR as outlined in the literature review can be found within Babiak and Wolfe's (2009) supporting characteristics of North American sport (e.g., passion, transparency, economic structure, and stakeholder management), suggesting that sport managers and executives know to play off of the industry's strengths. Stakeholder management and consumer passion/interest may be more associated with consumer perception and community impact, whereas organizational transparency and economic structure are more related to notions of authenticity and management of resources and mutual goals through partnerships.

Consumer perception plays a significant role in PSOs' CSR strategy, as loyalty from fans can often translate into greater profit and popularity. CSR in sport has been shown to positively influence consumer attitude, showing that fans do care and expect a sense of citizenship from their leagues, teams, and athletes. CRSM is an especially useful tool when demonstrating a link between a cause and a PSO, as the intended outcomes tend to involve an enhanced perception of the organization, increased brand loyalty, and consumer brand switching. Hence, generating a sense of goodwill with the fans is integral

to a PSO's CSR initiatives because it creates both an alternative revenue stream and an improved reputation relative to other leagues. Certain levels of the CSR pyramid are visible within this consumer-focused strategy, such as the economic responsibility of making a profit along with the ethical obligation of adhering to social values and morals.

Making an impact on the community, both locally and globally, is an important strategy associated with CSR in sport. PSOs work to give back by helping to make improvements in areas such as education, health and wellness, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, gender equity, and youth participation in sport. While the type of CSR programming created by PSOs and teams can be influenced by their geographical location and internal resources, frequent external pressures such as the media and the public may also drive these kinds of decisions. Imitation across leagues' CSR does occur, especially with the increase in the popularity of environmental sustainability initiatives. Suggestions for further research regarding CSR in sport frequently mention the need for better understanding community impact, which one could argue would be greatly beneficial for global efforts in developing countries. While sport CSR provides access to areas and groups that have been otherwise ignored or marginalized (e.g., youth and women/girls), scholars warn about the negative influence of pre-existing social and cultural norms that emanate from the First World. The ethical and philanthropic/discretionary levels of the CSR pyramid are most evident within this strategy of community impact, as PSOs and other sport-related organizations seek to fulfill their expected (ethical) and desired (philanthropic/discretionary) social responsibilities. In light of the sensitivities surrounding sport CSR in the Third World,

one might question how Carroll's notion of ethics can be appropriately applied due to the difference in social and cultural norms. Whose ethics must PSOs take into account when implementing CSR, and how can they ensure that such programs are impactful for their intended audience?

CSR in sport regularly relies on partnerships in order to identify and implement activities. Aside from donations, partnerships transform CSR into a much more active and goal-oriented initiative by building strong networks within the community and making improvements to the status quo. Partnerships allow PSOs to be just that: a partner. Strategic alliances with NGOs, community organizations, government, and other entities provide special knowledge and insight to help target the appropriate causes, along with the potential for increased resources/support and profit through alternative revenue streams. Still, it is important to remember that these CSR partnerships are a two-way street since alignment with strong sports brands positively contributes to the donation behavior toward nonprofits. This is not surprising, considering that sport is inherently an institution that elicits mass media attention and a passionate audience. As demonstrated by the case study findings of Heinze et al. (2014), CSR partnerships can be successful for PSOs if maintained with respect and humility, a commitment to assistance and mutually beneficial goals, authentic behavior, and overall improvement of the community by acting as a broker between organizations. From a critical standpoint, the integration of partnerships in PSOs' CSR could most likely be identified at each level of Carroll's (1991) pyramid of CSR, but that remains to be proven through further research such as this study.

Once all of the technical and strategic components of CSR are stripped away, one can argue that the only thing left is the notion of authenticity. In other words, do firms appear genuine, truthful and honest in their CSR activities? Authenticity is an important strategy (if you can even label it a strategy — after all, should it not be somewhat organic and sincere?) within CSR because not only does it motivate a PSO to consider which social issues make the most sense for the organization's mission, but it also has a strong effect on the consumer and the general public. Authenticity has the ability to be embedded within all levels of Carroll's (1991) pyramid of CSR, but this integration has yet to be explored on a larger scale within the world of sport. Unfortunately, when handled incorrectly, CSR activities that appear insincere can cause great harm to an organization's reputation. This unfortunate reaction was observed in Giannoulakis and Drayer's (2009) study surrounding the NBA Cares program's impact on player image. To avoid being perceived by fans as a cover-up or as an excuse for misbehavior, PSOs must accurately plan, market, and time their CSR initiatives. This suggests that CSR in sport should aim to be proactive rather than reactive.

Chapter Three: Design and Methodology

Rationale for the Study

The topic of CSR in sport is becoming progressively relevant in today's world, especially as PSOs face increasing pressure from stakeholders to act as caring corporate citizens and invest resources back into the community. While many sports organizations continue to implement social responsibility programs with a variety of partners, such actions do not transpire without critique from the media, the general public, and others. This study has built upon recent research which has identified the significance and strategic elements associated with partnerships within PSOs' CSR. By analyzing the attitude of PSO employees that work within departments dedicated to social responsibility, this analysis sought to both gain a better understanding as to their thought-process toward CSR partnership and further define their understanding of and desire for "authenticity." Additionally, the survey component of this mixed methods study helped to clarify the PSOs' internal perception of their CSR partnerships within the framework of Carroll's levels of social responsibility (i.e., economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic). The goal of this study was to provide results that would help inform the overall approach toward and implementation of strategic and genuine partnerships within PSOs' CSR activities.

Statement of the Problem

While previous studies surrounding CSR in sport have helped to create theoretical frameworks and conceptual models, only recently have researchers begun to explore the "how" and the "why" behind PSOs' social responsibility actions. Summaries of trends within current league-wide efforts, explorations into cause-related marketing initiatives and consumer attitude, and analyses of global CSR programs are just the tip of the iceberg. Heinze et al.'s (2014) case study of the Detroit Lions demonstrates a concerted effort to take research to the next level and identify what successful implementation of CSR looks like within sport. This particular study sought to further fill this gap in the literature by addressing one of the most integral components of CSR: strategic and authentic partnership. In other words, what can PSOs do to better implement CSR partnerships that are mutually beneficial, effective and sincere? As an explanatory sequential mixed methods study, quantitative data was first collected in the form of a survey to analyze the PSOs' assessment of their CSR partnerships as they relate to the organizations' social responsibilities. Afterward, participating employees were engaged in the form of semi-structured interviews to provide a clearer vision as to these leagues' attitudes toward partnership in CSR and more importantly, how these relationships can be used to promote long-term interests and goals for the good of the organization as well as the community.

Research Questions

The following research questions helped to drive both the qualitative and quantitative instruments applied within this study. The ultimate goal of these questions was to better understand how PSOs view the identification and implementation of strategic and authentic partnerships within their CSR activities, as well as analyze how the PSOs rate their CSR partnership efforts in regards to authenticity and fulfilling their economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities.

1. What are PSOs' attitudes toward their current efforts surrounding CSR partnerships?

2. What are the most important factors to a PSO when identifying partnerships for its CSR efforts?

3. What are some of the key strategies associated with implementing a successful CSR partnership?

4. How do PSOs view the concept of "authenticity" as it relates to their CSR partnerships?

5. How does the identification and implementation of PSOs' CSR partnerships correlate to the fulfillment of the organizations' economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities?

Variables and Definitions

This research was conducted as an explanatory sequential mixed methods study. Therefore, quantitative data was first collected through a 5-point Likert scale survey in

order to determine the respondents' attitude (favorable or unfavorable) toward their PSO's identification and implementation of CSR partnerships, as well as the degree to which they believe their particular league's CSR partnership efforts fulfill their organization's economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. After data was collected from the survey, the goal was to conduct a second, qualitative phase in order to help explain the quantitative results. As discussed in the Results section, the timeframe of these phases overlapped due to a slower-than-expected response rate. The semi-structured interviews sought to further expand upon the participants' attitudes toward the strategy associated with each PSO's CSR partnerships, consider whether these alliances fulfill Carroll's components of organizational social responsibility, and explore the concept of authenticity within CSR.

While only four survey respondents voluntarily elected to take part in the interview portion, participants remained the same throughout each phase and were comprised of PSO employees that work within each league or team front office/department associated with social responsibility efforts. Participating league-wide departments may be categorized specifically as Social Responsibility for certain professional leagues, whereas other respondents/front office employees may be allocated to similar departments such as Community Relations, Sustainability, and/or Public Affairs. It was expected that the independent variable of the quantitative portion would be the respondents' employer/PSO (i.e., NFL, MLB and NBA), whereas the dependent variable will be the participants' survey responses/attitudes toward their CSR partnerships' fulfillment of organizational social responsibilities. Due to low response

rate, the quantitative results were analyzed as a whole (or rather, one group representing PSOs in general), whereas any data comparing employer/PSO is presented but purely exploratory. It was possible that mediating variables might have included a respondent's job title (e.g., senior leadership, manager or coordinator), along with his or her current duration of employment as this may speak to the respondent's overall knowledge concerning the league's CSR efforts.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis for the quantitative portion of this study stated that the respondents from all participating PSOs would have a favorable attitude toward the current identification and implementation of CSR partnerships within their organization.

The second hypothesis for the quantitative portion of this study stated that a PSO's perceived ethical and philanthropic responsibilities would have the greatest impact on the identification and implementation of its CSR partnerships, whereas the perceived economic and legal responsibilities would have the least impact.

The third hypothesis for the quantitative portion of this study stated that the respondents from all participating PSOs would agree that previously established elements of authentic CSR are important to their CSR partnership efforts.

Population and Sampling

While many professional athletes from a variety of sports are involved with social responsibility initiatives, this study focused on the top North American PSOs' perception of their CSR. As corporate social responsibility often seeks to give back to the

community, it is appropriate for this research to have targeted the top three PSOs that are most favored by the community in question. After surveying 2,255 adults, a 2014 Harris Poll found that professional football was 32% of American's favorite sport, followed by baseball and men's professional basketball (Pollack, 2015). Subsequently, the target population for this study was comprised of NFL, NBA and MLB employees that have direct involvement in either their league's or their particular team's CSR efforts and partnerships. In order to better understand the size of the target population, it was estimated that each of the aforementioned PSOs has at least one executive who oversees league-wide CSR initiatives. Additionally, all teams within each PSO (32 in the NFL, 30 in the MLB, and 30 in the NBA) have some kind of a Community Relations/Affairs department that specializes in bridging the gap between team and community and averages anywhere from three to five employees. Taking into account these numbers, a rough estimation of the total population size was about 279 employees. Characteristics of this population included each respondent's employer, job title (e.g., director, manager, coordinator), length of employment, gender, age and race. While the first three demographic characteristics spoke more to each employee's work-oriented CSR knowledge and overall goals, the last three highlight the social/cultural backgrounds that may have ultimately informed their personal perspective toward issues of social responsibility.

It must be noted that access to potential respondents within a PSO can be difficult to locate/contact and so a non-probability snowball sampling technique was utilized within the survey portion of the study. As initial contact for the quantitative phase was

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made with accessible PSO employees, an expected response rate of 15% (about 42 individuals) was instituted due to the exclusivity of their positions and unpredictability of participation. The Results section will further discuss the actual survey response rate, which totaled about 9% (26 individuals). Once the respondents completed the first section, they had the opportunity to voluntarily pass along the survey to colleagues as well as participate in a semi-structured, open-ended interview. It was initially planned that non-probability purposive sampling – otherwise known as judgmental or selective sampling – would be applied in order to select a smaller but diverse and representative group of PSO employees for the interview sessions. However, only four participants elected to take part in the second phase (as opposed to the expected twelve/four respondents per PSO), thus preventing any non-probability purposive sampling from being conducted as well as limiting the variety and depth of qualitative data.

Bias may have occurred within this study due to non-probability sampling methods. Overall, the procedures may have resulted in selection bias; or rather, a sample that is not truly representative of the total population. Utilizing a non-probability snowball sampling technique for voluntary participants within the survey portion may have only attracted the respondents who are able to be located as well as those who feel strongly (either positively or negatively) about their league and/or team's CSR efforts. On the other hand, the perspectives of silent, non-participants may have remained unknown and unaccounted for. It is also possible that if a highly respected PSO employee is first contacted, his or her potential election of another respondent may have caused undue influence/pressure to participate in the project regardless of interest. Furthermore,

participants who engaged via the snowball sampling method may have caused a likeness

of answers due to the similar of organizational background. Overall, this survey may

have caused response bias due to wording that might be considered as "leading" or

respondents who actively tried to present themselves favorably rather than respond

truthfully. It was also expected that non-probability purposive sampling presented a high

possibility for researcher bias. However, due to the inability to choose interview

participants from a larger pool, it is still possible that this sample of respondents was not

representative of the greater population thus causing difficulty during the defense of

overall findings.

Research Design and Implementation

As previously mentioned, this was a *mixed methods* study; otherwise known as

multimethod, mixed methodology, integrating, synthesis, and *quantitative and qualitative*

methods (Creswell, 2014). This type of study involves collecting, analyzing, and

integrating both qualitative and quantitative data in order to inform specific research

questions and hypotheses (Creswell, 2014). Due to the fact that previous research is

lacking surrounding PSOs' CSR partnerships and accompanying strategies, the mixed

methods design helped to clarify PSOs' internal perceptions of their league and/or team's

CSR partnerships as well as the integration of authenticity within such alliances. As an

explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the quantitative section of the study first

explored the PSOs' initial attitudes toward the identification and implementation of CSR

partnerships within the framework of Carroll's levels of CSR. Additionally, this study

was defined as non-experimental because there is no manipulation or control of the

variables. After the quantitative data was collected, the qualitative open-ended interviews were structured to build directly on survey results by allowing respondents to further elaborate on their views and emphasize significant issues that impact their particular league or team's social responsibility initiatives and partnerships. It was expected that data from both phases of the study would hopefully provide a more thorough understanding as to how PSOs can approach partnerships as a tool to achieve positive levels of CSR.

Survey and interview questions were submitted to and approved by George Mason University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in accordance with ethical considerations for conducting research.

The quantitative instrument within this study was a Likert scale survey with a 5-point rating. With an initial, expected response rate of 15%, 42 individuals were anticipated to participate within the survey phase of the study. The majority of the survey was framed within Carroll's (1991) levels of corporate social responsibility: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. The remaining statements regarding authenticity and its potential relation to partnerships were framed within Beckman et al.'s (2009) concept of authentic CSR, which defines it as demonstrating "passion for the cause, transparency, consistency, and visibility in the community" as well as "tailored specifically to the needs of local stakeholders" (Heinze et al., 2014). In order to better comprehend PSOs' attitude regarding their CSR partnership efforts, participants will rank their attitude toward survey statements as Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neither Disagree Nor Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5, or N/A = 0. At the end of the survey, respondents had the

opportunity to volunteer themselves as potential participants for the second/interview phase of the study by inputting their preferred contact information.

The qualitative instrument within this study was a semi-structured, open-ended telephone interview. It was hoped that a higher interest rate would allow for a final group of twelve interviewees (four individuals per PSO) with the aim of creating a diverse pool, but interview participation was lower than anticipated. The purpose of these discussions was to build upon the survey data in greater detail by gaining a better understanding as to the PSOs' interpretations of their current CSR partnership efforts, as well as the internal motives (i.e., economic and legal social responsibilities) and external motives (i.e., ethical and philanthropic social responsibilities) behind such collaborations. Another benefit of a larger participant pool may have allowed for the open-ended interviews to help highlight certain unique factors that each league or team must anticipate when approaching their CSR partnerships and initiatives, as well as provide a more in-depth exploration of each PSO's definition of authenticity and its relation to CSR partnerships.

As an indication of the soundness of one's research, there are often threats to both internal and external validity. One potential threat to internal validity was history, meaning that extraneous events could have affected a participant's responses over the course of the experiment. For instance, a PSO may have unexpectedly faced a public concern with one of their CSR initiatives in the midst of the study, thereby affecting those employee's responses to certain questions about partnership. However, both phases of this study were designed to occur in a limited timeframe that would have hopefully minimized any unplanned yet impactful experiences. Another potential threat to internal

validity was mortality due to the number of initial respondents that may elect not to participate in the secondary interview phase of the study. In response to the internal threat of dropouts, it was hoped that a diverse group of participants would be selected by reviewing variables such as job level/title, duration of employment, gender, age and race/ethnicity when selecting individuals for the semi-structured interviews. Unfortunately, this selection process was not possible with only four interviewees.

External validity is concerned with the extent to which a study's results apply to the larger population, so a potential threat within this research included issues with selection. Not only might the initial respondents been unrepresentative of the larger population of PSO employees that work directly with CSR, but also it's possible that the amount of participants may have become skewed toward one league over another thus creating unequal representation and opinion. Another threat to external validity included the setting/situation because participants were responding from a distance through Internet and over the telephone. Consequently, participants may have responded differently than if they were questioned during in-person surveys and interviews. In response to these threats to external validity, it was expected that an equal amount of representatives would be chosen for the telephone interview portion. Still, the interview questions were open-ended in order to encourage thoughtful answers, and participants were ensured confidentiality in order to ensure honesty.

Research Setting

This study targeted three of the major PSOs: the NFL, NBA and MLB. While these leagues' headquarters and CSR senior leadership are based in New York City, the

individual teams' front office Community Relations/Affairs staff are located in all

regions within the United States. Thus, this research setting spanned the country and was

large in scope. Including potential Canadian respondents who are employed by the

Toronto Blue Jays (MLB) and Toronto Raptors (NBA), it was hoped that the research

would be quite diverse thanks to the various regions, cities and demographics represented

in the study. Large U.S. cities like Chicago, New York and San Francisco house multiple

teams and corporate offices, causing some of the participants to be located in the same

general area where they may focus on similar community issues/social causes through

their CSR efforts. However, there are currently 25 states that do *not* host an NBA, NFL,

nor MLB team and subsequently were not represented in this study: Alabama, Alaska,

Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine,

Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, New Hampshire, New Mexico,

Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia (not including

Washington D.C.), West Virginia, and Wyoming. Fortunately, this large research setting

was possible due to the method of data collection that is described below.

Data Collection

Because league headquarters and teams are located all around the United States,

both the quantitative and qualitative sections of this research were conducted through

more convenient modes of communication such as the Internet and the telephone. As the

first phase of this study was largely dependent on a snowball sampling technique (i.e.,

locating a few potentially available participants who can assist in recruiting

additional/future subjects via their relationships), the official survey e-mail cover letter

located in Appendix C was sent to those potential respondents via email in order to communicate the purpose of the study, ask for their participation and inquire as to whether they can assist in the recruitment of colleagues that fit within the targeted population. The invitation letter also featured a link to access the Likert scale survey located in Appendix A. The survey remained accessible for an extended period of nine weeks (May 29, 2016 – July 30, 2016) due to a slower-than-expected response rate, and data from the responses was collected via the Survey Monkey website. Prior to submission of the survey, respondents were able to establish their association with the NBA, NFL or MLB, along with other demographic details (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender). Respondents also had the option to input their preferred contact information if interested in potentially participating in the telephone interview (Appendix D).

Once all potential interview participants were identified for the second phase of the research, it was proposed that four individuals would be selected from each PSO (a total of 12 interviewees) with the aim of creating the most diverse interview sample as possible. In order to attain diversity, variables that would have been taken into account during this selection include job level, duration of employment, gender, race/ethnicity and age. While interviewee selection was not possible due to low turnout, all four, interested respondents were contacted in order to confirm participation and arrange a convenient time for the telephone interview. The timeframe of this second phase was extended to seven weeks (June 12, 2016 – July 30, 2016) due to lack of availability on the interviewees' schedules. Respondents were required to grant consent toward audio recording of the interview sessions with the sole purposes of transcription and analysis.

The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured to allow for comparison and analysis amongst all respondents, and each discussion lasted about 15-20 minutes as opposed to the estimated 25-30 minutes. The questions outlined in Appendix C were purposely open-ended to highlight relevant topics and provide the participant with an opportunity to diverge in his or her answers pending individual experiences and opinions.

Data Analysis

The survey collected data through a 5-point Likert scale survey (1 being "strongly disagree" to 5 being "strongly agree," and 0 as "not applicable") that was written within the framework of Carroll's (1991) levels of CSR as well as Beckman et al.'s (2009) concept of authentic CSR. The survey also featured two questions that were meant to gauge the respondents' overall outlook toward the successful (or not successful) identification and implementation of CSR partnerships within their PSO. Because the quantitative portion sought to analyze the participants' perception of their CSR partnerships, SPSS was utilized to calculate the frequency distribution of the independent variable in order to get a "big picture" view of the responses. SPSS was also used to calculate descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation of the dependent variable (i.e., specific responses surround their CSR partnerships' fulfillment of organizational social responsibilities and integration of authenticity). It was expected that this type of calculation would allow me to compare and contrast the participants' responses as they relate to specific social responsibilities (i.e., economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic) as well as notions of authenticity and overall success.

The secondary phase of this study involved a semi-structured, open-ended interview that was conducted via telephone. Not only were the interview questions structured to hopefully build upon the initial survey responses, but they were also created in a way that expands upon the thought-process behind CSR partnerships and the integration of authenticity. In order to make sense of such rich discussions, the data was "winnowed" with the aim of focusing in on only the relevant parts of the data (Creswell, 2014, p. 195). Therefore, the organization, sorting, and searching of qualitative results occurred through the process of thematic coding and chunking after reading through the transcribed interviews. By segmenting the text into specific categories, common themes regarding PSOs' approach toward CSR partnerships were more easily identified and were expected to help support or reject the survey results upon comparison. The qualitative results were to also aid in constructing a general framework toward employing CSR partnerships as a tool to achieve positive, impactful, and genuine levels of CSR.

Chapter Four: Results

Quantitative Data

The first portion of this study involved a Likert scale survey with the goal of analyzing PSOs' internal perceptions of their league and/or team CSR partnerships as well as the notion of authenticity within the context of these relationships. As illustrated in Appendix A, the majority of the survey questions (16 total) were structured within the framework of Carroll's (1991) levels of CSR: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic. Seven additional questions were framed within Beckman et al.'s (2009) definition of authentic CSR, and were included to analyze attitudes toward the integration of authenticity within PSOs' CSR partnerships. Finally, two questions regarding appropriate CSR partnership identification and successful CSR partnership implementation were included to help explore the participants' attitudes toward these internal processes. The aforementioned questions were scaled from 1 (Strongly Disagree) all the way to 5 (Strongly Agree), with a Not Applicable (N/A) option weighted as 0. It is possible that the "N/A" option may have provided a metaphorical "back door" for respondents to use should they choose to skip over a question, but it is important to distinguish feelings of definite non-consideration toward a certain category as opposed to feelings of neutrality. The survey also featured demographic questions (e.g., age, title, length of employment) so as to allow the opportunity to select a diverse, representative sample for the interview

phase, but unfortunately only four survey respondents elected to participate in comparison to the anticipated total of twelve.

It was stated earlier that the initial expected response rate for this study was 15%, or about 42 individuals between the NBA, NFL and MLB. However, the actual response rate was closer to 9%, meaning that only 26 individuals completed the survey. This lower-than-expected turnout somewhat shifted the focus when reviewing the following results, driving the data to be viewed as a whole. Comparisons between leagues are provided in Tables 4 and 5, but these results are analyzed as simply exploratory.

Table 1 is ranked from highest to lowest mean and illustrates the response frequency, mean and standard deviation for the 16 questions concerning Carroll's (1991) pyramid of CSR (a key for the questions is located in Appendix B). A secondary ranking of standard deviation was applied in order to account for questions that resulted in the same mean but perhaps had responses that were more spread out amongst the rating scale. Participants most strongly agreed with two of the ethical social responsibilities, specifically, "It is important that our CSR partnerships demonstrate good corporate citizenship (i.e., doing what is expected morally or ethically)" and "It is important that our CSR partnerships are consistent with expectations of societal mores and ethical norms." Philanthropic social responsibilities were not far behind in terms of favorability, as respondents agreed that it is important for their CSR partnerships to voluntarily enhance a community's quality of life, encourage their managers and employees to participate in voluntary and charitable activities within the local community, and perform in a manner consistent with philanthropic and charitable expectations of society.

Table 1 also features the social responsibility priorities that received the lowest

agreement/favorability, specifically economic-oriented statements like the importance of

CSR partnerships helping to generate a profit, assisting in the maintenance of a strong

and competitive financial position, and performing in a manner consistent with

maximizing earnings per share. It is noted that the philanthropic statement, "It is

important that our CSR partnerships help provide assistance to the fine and performing

arts" also received a low amount of agreement and greater standard deviation (1.42),

which is understandable as support for the fine and performing arts may not be a typical

consideration when PSOs identify and implement CSR partnerships. Interestingly, all

four questions pertaining to legal social responsibilities received the most "N/A"

responses, as well as higher standard deviations due to responses that ranged throughout

the scale.

Table 1. Elements of social responsibilities within CSR partnerships *n=26*								
CSR Priority	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Mean	SD
ETH2	0	0	0	9	17	0	4.65	0.49
P1	0	0	2	10	14	0	4.46	0.65
ETH1	0	1	1	9	15	0	4.46	0.76
P2	0	1	5	8	12	0	4.19	0.90
P3	1	1	0	17	7	0	4.08	0.89
ETH3	0	1	4	16	5	0	3.96	0.72
L3	1	0	1	16	7	1	3.96	1.15
EC3	0	0	7	14	5	0	3.92	0.69
ETH4	0	2	4	12	7	1	3.81	1.17
L1	2	1	5	12	5	1	3.54	1.30
L2	1	4	7	8	5	1	3.35	1.29
L4	1	2	10	9	2	2	3.11	1.28
EC2	2	6	9	7	2	0	3.04	1.08
EC1	1	8	10	6	1	0	2.92	0.93
P4	1	9	7	3	3	3	2.58	1.42
EC4	1	6	11	5	0	3	2.54	1.21

Respondents were also questioned about their agreement toward certain elements of authentic CSR (as defined by Beckman et al., 2009) within their CSR partnerships. Table 2 is sorted from highest to lowest agreement and illustrates the frequency, mean and standard deviation for all responses surrounding the elements of authentic CSR (a key for these questions is located Appendix B). Highest agreement was reported with the demonstration of the league and/or team's passion for the cause, while transparency, consistency, visibility within the community, alignment with team/league mission, and tailoring to the needs of local stakeholders followed respectively. The statement regarding stakeholder needs received the highest standard deviation of 1.44,

demonstrating a greater deviation in responses from the mean and possibly signaling

uncertainty toward the implementation of this priority in a partnership. Overall, the group

total mean of 4.34 indicates that respondents seem to support the study's third hypothesis,

stating that the respondents from all participating PSOs would agree that previously

established elements of authentic CSR are important to their CSR partnership efforts.

Table 2. Elements of authentic CSR within CSR partnerships *n=26*								
Elements of Authenticity	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Mean	SD
A1	0	0	0	8	18	0	4.69	0.47
A3	0	0	0	12	14	0	4.54	0.51
A2	0	0	3	9	14	0	4.42	0.70
A4	0	0	3	10	13	0	4.38	0.70
A5	0	0	2	13	11	0	4.35	0.63
A7	0	0	1	11	13	1	4.31	1.05
A6	1	1	3	12	7	2	3.65	1.44
Total mean & standard deviation							4.34	0.46

As the questions regarding appropriate identification and successful

implementation of CSR partnerships were singular, Table 3 neatly summarizes the

frequency, mean, and standard deviation of both inquiries. The questions were rated high

in agreement amongst the participants, while only one respondent disagreed with the

notion that their league/team identifies appropriate CSR partnerships. In general, the

means in Table 3 (4.54 and 4.58) support the study's first hypothesis that states

respondents from all participating PSOs would have a favorable attitude toward the

current identification and implementation of CSR partnerships within their organization.

Table 3. CSR partnership identification and implementation *n=26*								
Category	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Mean	SD
Identify appropriate partnership	0	1	0	9	16	0	4.54	0.71
Implement successful partnership	0	0	1	9	16	0	4.58	0.58

Questions regarding levels of social responsibility were grouped and analyzed

within SPSS in order to rank the categories amongst the survey participants as a whole.

This data was only significant to the survey participants, meaning it cannot fully support

the second hypothesis which makes reference to the larger population of PSOs, stating

that perceived ethical and philanthropic responsibilities would have the greatest impact

on the identification and implementation of their CSR partnerships while perceived

economic and legal responsibilities would have the least impact. Even though economic

social responsibility was the item rated with the lowest value, attitudes toward this

category were not particularly negative as its mean fell closest to the "neither disagree or

agree" rating. The variation in range of responses is most evident in the legal category

with a standard deviation of 0.98, whereas responses for ethical, philanthropic and

economic categories varied a bit less with standard deviations of 0.56, 0.62 and 0.57

respectively.

Table 4. Ranked levels of social responsibility *n=26*		
Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Ethical	4.22	0.56
Philanthropic	3.83	0.62
Legal	3.49	0.98
Economic	3.11	0.57

The results of the survey responses as a group may not be largely significant due

to lower-than-expected participation. However, they do suggest that ethical and

philanthropic social responsibilities, which are closer to an "agreement" rating, have a

greater impact on the identification and implementation of the respondents' CSR

partnerships as compared to legal and economic responsibilities, which are closer to a

"neither agree or disagree"/neutral rating. Descriptive statistics surrounding the

characteristics of authentic CSR also show that PSOs value the importance and

integration of authenticity within CSR partnerships. It should be noted that the amount of

"N/A" responses resulted in only about fifteen, or 2%, of the total responses.

Tables 5 and 6 are presented with the intention of simply opening the door to

comparisons that might be made between the NBA, NFL and MLB responses but as

mentioned, participation was a bit too low to draw any real significance from the data.

However, the means and standard deviations within Table 5 may suggest that the respondents among all three leagues feel comparably favorable toward the identification of appropriate CSR partnerships and their implementation. The means for these two categories only ranged between 4.38 and 4.67, which is a large disparity. In terms of perceptions toward authenticity within the leagues' CSR partnerships, the means also did not demonstrate a sizeable difference between the NBA (4.30), NFL (4.35), and MLB (4.36), but does signify that all three leagues are favorable toward its integration. The NBA's higher standard deviation within the identification category was most likely a result of the one participant who disagreed, whereas others either agreed or strongly agreed. Additionally, the MLB's standard deviation for implementation was a result of the eight responses ranging from "disagree" to "agree" on the scale.

Exploratory comparisons between the leagues' perceptions of social responsibility categories are shown in Table 6. The rankings between leagues are not necessarily the same, which is an interesting occurrence. For instance, the NBA employee rankings seem to mirror the rankings from the entire survey group presented in Table 4. The MLB employee rankings are similar as well, except the means for the ethical and philanthropic categories are equal at 4.06. However, the NFL's rankings are different, with ethical receiving the highest rating, then legal, philanthropic and economic in descending order.

Table 5. Agreement toward CSR partnership identification, implementation and authenticity (league exploratory results)			
League	Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
NBA	Identification	4.44	1.01
n=9	Implementation	4.67	0.50
	Authenticity	4.30	0.48
NFL	Identification	4.67	0.50
n=9	Implementation	4.67	0.50
	Authenticity	4.35	0.50
MLB	Identification	4.50	0.53
n=8	Implementation	4.38	0.74
	Authenticity	4.36	0.49

Table 6. Ranked levels of social responsibility (league exploratory results)			
League	Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
NBA	Ethical	4.31	0.68
n=9	Philanthropic	3.83	0.65
	Legal	3.19	1.18
	Economic	2.92	0.45
NFL	Ethical	4.28	0.32
n=9	Legal	3.83	0.59
	Philanthropic	3.61	0.50
	Economic	3.03	0.64
MLB	Ethical	4.06	0.66
n=8	Philanthropic	4.06	0.70
	Legal	3.44	1.10
	Economic	3.41	0.55

Qualitative Data

A second phase of open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to allow survey participants to further expand upon their attitudes toward the identification and implementation of their league/team's CSR partnerships and discuss

the strategies and priorities associated with these processes. The interviews were also meant to help define the PSOs' internal perceptions of authenticity within the context of CSR partnerships. Four survey respondents elected to participate in this second phase, which does not translate into the most diverse/representative sample: one NBA employee, one NFL employee, and one MLB employee. To maintain anonymity, interviewees were provided pseudonyms: NBA1, NBA2, NFL1 and MLB1. The NBA and NFL participants were all representatives of their leagues' corporate offices and not associated with one particular team, while the MLB participant was a representative of the Washington Nationals' Youth Baseball Academy. It must be noted that while the MLB interviewee is involved with CSR initiatives and listed as a front office employee, the Academy is not underwritten by the club and is technically more a recipient of CSR efforts rather than a creator. Regardless, the MLB interview was included as it provided an alternative and interesting viewpoint in comparison with the other leagues. All participants except NBA2 consented to audio recording, therefore quotes were transcribed by hand during the interview with NBA2. It is possible that capturing the quotes in real-time may have resulted in the accidental exclusion of certain bits of information, but NBA2's interview featured the least amount of elaboration and description compared to other respondents.

There are a multiple instances where themes in Tables 7, 8 and 9 may not have an applicable quote to reference from a particular PSO, perhaps due to the lack of participation in this study phase. It is also possible that the structure of a real-time phone interview left participants with less time to consider their questions, as opposed to seeing the questions in writing and being able to compose a thoughtful answer. However,

themes were highlighted and analyzed if discussed in at least two different PSO

interviews in order to maximize the qualitative data.

External CSR partnership priorities. All four interviewees spoke about their

perceptions of CSR as well as the priorities they consider when identifying and

implementing their CSR partnerships. Community impact and social pressures/public

were highlighted as external priorities within the interview transcripts. Quotations

surrounding these key themes can be found in Table 7.

Community impact. The interviewees spoke to an external focus on making an

impact within the community, both on a local and a global level. NFL1 elaborated on

their organization's thought-process behind CSR partnerships and how society, one of the

main stakeholders of CSR, is prioritized above their financial bottom line. "We really

think about things, how they're good for society first, not necessarily how they're good

for our business first," stated NFL1. MLB1 spoke similarly about this theme when they

said that they are more concerned with making a global impact rather than "worrying

about the bottom line so much." NBA2 agreed that "giving back to the community" is the

league's "backbone of who we are," while NBA1 supposed that it would be interesting to

see the league expand their social responsibility endeavors abroad. Babiak and Wolfe

(2006) found that CSR has been used to help combat negative criticism through

community impact, but perhaps predictably, the interviewees made no mention of

utilizing CSR partnerships in this way.

Social pressures/public perception. Both NFL1 and MLB1 acknowledged that

the current social atmosphere and public perception play a big role in the identification

and implementation of their CSR partnerships. NFL1 mentioned external "politics" and their recent involvement in domestic violence awareness initiatives, having conceded that this effort was largely influenced by particular "high-profile cases surrounding our players" that "forced us to look inward and figure out how we could turn a really bad situation into something positive." MLB1 spoke at great length about the Youth Academy's initial perception within their community and the challenges they faced in attempting to make their mission known. As the Academy was partnering with a group of a higher socio-economic class to rent-out their facilities, it was important to acknowledge that the same underserved community they are motivated to serve may have initially perceived the partnership in a negative light. This attention to public perception speaks to Tacon and Walters' (2010) UK study, in which football executives were found to not only highly value customer loyalty, but they also identified fans as key stakeholders who needed to be considered when implementing more inclusive programs to gain their patronage.

Internal CSR partnership priorities. Internal considerations appeared to outnumber external motivations, as the identification of best-fit partners, alignment with brand and/or mission, management of expectations and utilization of metrics were the most common themes. Table 8 features applicable respondent quotations for each theme.

Identify best-fit partners/experts. NBA2, NFL1 and MLB1 all expressed the importance of partnering with experts in the context of their CSR efforts. NBA2 provided examples of such best-fit partners, like the Department of Defense and the USO in relation to their *Hoops for Troops* initiative that targets the military population. NFL1

confirmed that while they might be "the experts of football," they rely on knowledgeable

partners who are deeply involved with a particular cause in order to add "legitimacy" and

"make real change." This train of thought is consistent with Inoue et al. (2013), who

claimed that an organization's reputation could be strengthened via philanthropic

partnerships. MLB1 also alluded to the need for well-informed partners, as they often

utilize players and coaches from a local private school to help mentor kids at the Youth

Baseball Academy both on and off the field.

  Alignment with brand and/or mission. Entering into and executing CSR

partnerships that are on-brand appeared to be another priority for all interviewees. NBA1

noted that while "not every partnership will align that greatly… it's great when we can

work with organizations who are interested in doing the exact same things" and ensure

that organizational values are aligned. NFL1 recognized that relationships that are not

brand-aligned "make it harder for us to find the right partnership for our clubs or players

to speak about the issues from the heart." MLB1 mirrored other respondents' feelings,

having emphasized that because the Youth Baseball Academy is only a couple years old,

they have experienced "growing pains" in the process of identifying strategic

partnerships "that are key to our mission" and "beneficial to the community." Alignment

with the PSO's mission not only promotes more thoughtful engagement, but this practice

also helps to provide an overall structure, or rather a road map, for such partnerships.

  Manage expectations. NBA1, NBA2 and MLB1 indicated that their ideal CSR

partnerships involve clear and open discussions about realistic goals. To elaborate, NBA1

expressed that they would not want to control or dictate the relationship, but instead

ensure that communication "is flowing both ways" as that may assist with the management of expectations. NBA2 confirmed expectation management is the "biggest thing" and echoed NBA1's sentiments about communication when highlighting the action of brainstorming with the CSR partner. Similar to MLB1's previous thoughts about the Academy's growing pains, the respondent expressed the desire for a "more defined approach, a more strategic approach" when partnering and "living by those expectations" set forth initially.

Metrics. While NFL1 did not directly mention the necessity to manage expectations, their statements discussing consistently thoughtful work and the use of metrics may be a similar way in which they keep goals in-check throughout the CSR partnership process. "It's become so important to be able to prove the value of what you're doing," stated NFL1, "I constantly have to remind myself and remind our partners to say, 'Do we have good results there?...Do you have follow up communications, and consistently seek feedback to know that the money you're spending is being put to good use?'" It should be noted that NFL1's reference to financial cost is a rare mention amongst the interviews. MLB1 provided its own perspective of metrics and impact measurement, expressing that challenges with a current CSR partner are a result of the fact that "we haven't been able to come to the table with an over-arching strategy about how we want to see impact, or how are we going to measure success from that partnership." The idea of gathering metrics seems to be a developing request in the CSR world, which is understandable from both a philanthropic and financial perspective.

Elements of authentic CSR partnerships. A portion of the phone interview was dedicated to allowing respondents the opportunity to express their views on authenticity and what that might look like within the context of their CSR partnerships. Four key themes were identified during the interviews, emphasizing that these authentic relationships must be relatable, align with the organizational mission, and prioritize collaboration as well as consistency.

Relatable. NBA1 and NFL1 appeared to stress the value of CSR initiatives and partnerships that resonate on a genuine level with certain stakeholders. "Our players are already embracing an overall health and wellness lifestyle," NBA1 said, making it relatively easy and "authentic" for them to speak about CSR initiatives associated with a similar cause. NBA1 noted that while their *Read to Achieve* partnership was indeed a positive cause to support, it may have been more difficult and less genuine for the players to speak about reading/education as opposed to health and wellness. NFL1 also emphasized the importance of supporting "causes and partners that resonate with our fans and the public, with our owners, with our clubs and our players" in order to communicate an "authentic message". Comparable to NBA1's discussion of fitness, NFL1 provided the example of childhood obesity and how the players can more easily associate and talk about their own experiences with health and wellness. This theme somewhat parallels Beckman et al.'s (2009) claim that authentic CSR demonstrates a passion for a cause. When partners can connect on a core issue that is a natural extension of their industry, it seems as though engagement becomes that much more genuine and enthusiastic.

Alignment with organizational mission. Similar to the internal prioritization of

CSR partnerships that align with brand and mission, NBA1, NFL1 and MLB1 found that

alignment with their mission is also a key element to an authentic CSR partnership. For

example, NBA1 spoke about their "natural partnership" with Kaiser Permanente, which

is an organization that both supports healthy lifestyles and matches nicely with the *NBA*

Fit platform. Additionally, NFL1 commented that strength could be found with partners

who can help "grow" and "expand" causes that are authentic to the NFL brand and "who

we are as a company." From the viewpoint of the Youth Baseball Academy, MLB1

explained that the authenticity of their CSR efforts is derived from their unique mission

and partners, resulting in a program that is unlike any other in the country. This theme

also supports one of Beckman et al.'s (2009) characteristics of authentic CSR, namely

that authentic CSR is "deeply embedded in the fabric of the firm" (p. 201).

Collaboration. NBA1, NFL1 and MLB1 all stressed the significance of

collaboration and true partner involvement within authentic CSR activities. Highlighting

the importance of equal benefit, NBA1 stated, "We definitely want to make sure that our

partner is happy with the activation. We realize it's a partnership and not necessarily us

telling them what to do, so we want to make sure that we work together and they are

involved in a lot of the decisions." For NFL1, they believe authenticity is "wanting to do

right by a cause, do right by a partner and not just say you're working with somebody or

some organization at a superficial level." Furthermore, NFL1 felt that any financial

support would certainly involve collaboration and active involvement on their part, rather

than simply "writing a check and walking away." These results are comparable with

Heinze et al. (2014) findings, which state successful partnership collaborate with respect and humility, enable and assist, engage authentically and create mutually beneficial goals. Collaboration is not a key theme mentioned by Beckman et al. (2009) within the context of authenticity, but some of the respondents like NFL1 did allude to a sort of visibility within the community by being active rather than passive partners.

      Consistency. Some of the respondents identified the notions consistency as an important element of authentic CSR partnerships. From a communications standpoint, NBA1 stated the importance of being consistent in their messaging with partners, allowing them "to involve our players authentically." NFL1 approached this theme from more of a decision-making perspective, stressing a detailed but uniform thought-process that helps to identify more authentic and impactful CSR programs and partnerships. Specific questions serve as checkpoints for NFL1, such as, "Are we supporting any competitors in this space? If there are multiple national organizations that support a cause, what makes us choose one versus the other?" And from a programming angle, MLB1 underscored the importance of having consistent volunteers, or "the same faces, the same people," due to the potential danger with the involvement of children who also follow a specific schedule. Interestingly, responses did not allude to a Beckman et al. (2014) definition of consistency where the PSO is socially responsible across *all* facets of the organization, but perhaps the respondents view this literal consistency in messaging, decision-making and programming as authentic because it exemplifies dedication to reliability, internal reflection, and in MLB1's case, compassion for youth development.

Table 7. Quotations of perceived priorities toward CSR partnership (external)			
*= NBA2 quotes transcribed by hand -- = no applicable quote to reference			
Theme	NBA Quotes	NFL Quotes	MLB Quotes
Community impact	*Giving back to the community and our fans and the NBA family… it's the backbone of who we are. I think it would be cool to see a few of our initiatives kind of expand overseas just because we have such a strong following internationally as well as domestically...we do have a lot of NBA camps and clinics that we run overseas that are our Global Games activation...	We really think about things, how they're good for society first, not necessarily how they're good for our business first.	Giving back to our community, and you know, not worrying about the bottom line so much versus making a global impact. Global can mean local, it can be regional, it can be international impact.
Social pressures/ public perception	--	We are held to a really high standard by the public and by our fans. We always have outside factors that are influencing the decisions we make. Politics... our involvement in domestic violence and sexual violence was very much external because it didn't come from us, it came from high-profile cases surrounding our players that forced us to look inward and figure out how we could turn a really bad situation into something that could be positive.	One of the struggles that we had when we first opened our doors was that we had this glimmering, shiny new facility in literally one of the most run-down and dangerous places, or I should say neighborhoods, in DC. We partnered immediately with the private high school, it's an all-boys school, but also it's a bunch of rich white kids playing baseball at this facility that's supposed to be for the community. We wanted to make sure that everyone knew we were here for them and not a practice facility for the Washington Nationals, which was the perception at the very beginning.

Table 8. Quotations of perceived priorities toward CSR partnership (internal)			
* = NBA2 quotes transcribed by hand -- = no applicable quote to reference			
Theme	NBA Quotes	NFL Quotes	MLB Quotes
Identify best-fit partners/"the experts"	*We work with the Department of Defense and the USO for *Hoops for Troops*. They are the experts, they let us know what works and what doesn't. *We belong to the Green Sports Alliance and use them as a sounding board. If a partner comes in and says, "we want to be in that space" and we do everything right, we go to GSA and ask if that's actually correct.	One of the key tenants that we hold to is that we are the experts of football, and not much else. If we're getting behind a cause, we need to partner with an expert in that cause. So we believe that having the right partner and the right leader not only guides you in the right direction and adds legitimacy to what you're doing, and it allows you to make real change rather than just spread awareness which is important, but I think we try to go a step further.	We partner with a local private school and their baseball program, and in addition to a rental fee that they pay us to use our facilities as their home field, their players and coaches will be on the field mentoring our kids. So they're sort of like junior coaches to our part-time staff. From a community outreach perspective, we want to make sure they understand we're providing services and resources for our community…we want to make sure we're partnering with the right people.
Alignment with brand and/or mission	…not every partnership will align that greatly, just because of the nature of the beast and the way the business is. But I think it's great when we can work with organizations who are interested in doing the exact same things that we do… …I wouldn't see somebody like a Ciroq or like, a Lays Potato Chips being our partner. I think making sure their values align with ours is probably the most important thing.	It's not as natural, and I would say there are other causes where we haven't been able to stand behind in such a big way that maybe speak less to the NFL brand and make it harder for us to find the right partnership for our clubs or players to speak about the issues from the heart.	It's really about having expectations written with our partners and making sure that our missions are aligned… That's what I would I say is you know... all the growing pains, and just drilling down on the partnerships that are key to our mission and furthering our mission, and are beneficial to our community.

Table 8 (continued)			
* = NBA2 quotes transcribed by hand			
-- = no applicable quote to reference			
Theme	NBA Quotes	NFL Quotes	MLB Quotes
Manage expectations	…the most important thing is making sure that it's a partnerships as opposed to …I don't want to say a dictatorship… but I just think communication is important and that it's flowing both ways, and it's not necessarily us telling the partner what to do. *We have to be able to manage expectations. That's the biggest thing...We have to lay the groundwork and know what is realistic. It becomes a brainstorm with them.	--	And I think what we'd like to do is have a more defined approach, a more strategic approach to identifying partners and creating expectations and living by those expectations... We want to make sure that those expectations are fulfilled at the end of the day depending on when or how long the partnership lasts.
Metrics	--	It's become so important to be able to prove the value of what you're doing, to show data, to show reporting, to show metrics... And so I think it has to be top of mind all the time, and I don't necessarily know that it's top of mind for all of our partners right now. I constantly have to remind myself and remind our partners to say, do we have good results there?... How did you impact those people? Do you have follow up data? Do you have follow up communications, and consistently seek feedback to know that the money you're spending is being put to good use?	…there's another program who we partner with that uses our facilities in the summer, and it hasn't been successful in that we don't feel that it's made an impact on our community the way that we think it would have. And that's partially our fault -- it's dual faults. But we haven't been able to come to the table with an over-arching strategy about how we want to see impact, or how are we going to measure success from that partnership.

Table 9. Quotations of elements within authentic CSR partnerships * = NBA2 quotes transcribed by hand -- = no applicable quote to reference			
Theme	NBA Quotes	NFL Quotes	MLB Quotes
Relatable	…our players are already embracing an overall health and wellness lifestyle just because to play basketball at the elite level that they play at you have to be in relatively good shape, so asking them to promote fitness is something that I think is relatively easy and seems authentic for them. One of the initiatives we had in the past was *Read to Achieve*, which was a really important imitative because it encouraged young boys and girls to read and the importance of being educated, but that's something that may be a little more difficult for some of our players to articulate…	We try to get behind causes and partners that resonate with our fans and the public, with our owners, with our clubs, with our players, and that are natural to the NFL. So when we started tackling childhood obesity, we felt like it was a really authentic message to be talking about because all of our players live and breathe physical activity, right? So they did this growing up, it's how they got to where they are as NFL players, and as athletes, they are physically active all the time and eat healthy.	--
Alignment with organization mission	We've actually partnered with Kaiser Permanente as our overall presenting partner of *NBA Fit*. And the thing that's been cool for me is it's kind of a natural partnership. Kaiser Permanente is all about having a healthy lifestyle, and that merges exactly with what *NBA Fit* represents. That's one of the more authentic partnerships we have.	I would say that when the NFL supports something authentic to the league and authentic to who we are as a company and as a brand, then if you find partnerships that in the end can help that and grow that and expand that, then that makes that even stronger.	By virtue of our mission, partners and our program that we've implemented, we are authentic in that we have created a program through our Program Director that is unique – there's no other program like ours in the country.

Table 9 (continued)

* = NBA2 quotes transcribed by hand
-- = no applicable quote to reference

Theme	NBA Quotes	NFL Quotes	MLB Quotes
Collaboration	We definitely want to make sure that our partner is happy with the activation. We realize it's a partnership and not necessarily us telling them what to do, so we want to make sure that we work together and they are involved in a lot of the decisions.	And that's authenticity right? Is to really wanting to do right by a cause, do right by a partner and not just say you're working with somebody or some organization at a superficial level. If we're going to donate money or write a check, we like to be actively involved, we like to make relationships collaborative, we like to be supportive throughout the process, we like to be constantly reporting information back, and to really feel like what we're doing is making a difference and not just solving an issue by writing a check and walking away. And to me, that has a lot to do with authenticity, because I do feel like we are, we strive to be an authentic partner who cares about the topic at hand, who wants to listen and give guidance to make a partnership and to make a cause more impactful.	Softball was probably not in a lot of our girls' vocabulary, let alone baseball, so bringing in some female role models was huge, particularly from Howard and Georgetown. You know, they were on the field and were genuinely in the classrooms helping with homework and other mentoring enrichment activities.

Table 9 (continued) * = NBA2 quotes transcribed by hand -- = no applicable quote to reference			
<u>Theme</u>	<u>NBA Quotes</u>	<u>NFL Quotes</u>	<u>MLB Quotes</u>
Consistency	I think it's important that we're sending the right message because we (the players and our teams) have such a strong influence. So, we try our best to be consistent in communicating these messages with partners, like health and wellness, to involve our players authentically.	Nothing is done quickly. Everything is done in a really thoughtful and authentic way, and sometimes that means that things take longer than we'd want. But we have to have a process and weigh a lot of issues when we support things, when we create these programs. We think about -- are we supporting any competitors in this space? Why are we picking one non-profit to support versus another? If there are multiple national organizations that support a cause, what makes us choose one versus the other? And I think each of these is a long decision-making process.	I think we have a lot of organizations throughout the D.C. area who want to help in some way, and in some form with us. For us it's a little bit dicey, and when I say that it's because our kids are on a set schedule and we also don't want random people coming in and out. We really value consistency with volunteers, which is why having Gonzaga, having Howard coaches here, they're essentially the same uniforms, the same faces, the same people.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Key Lessons

The purpose of this study was to explore the perception and thought-process surrounding PSOs' identification and implementation of their CSR partnerships, especially as it relates to the consideration of their economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. In addition, the research hoped to further investigate notions of authenticity and how that concept might be integrated into the PSOs' partnerships.

Essentially, this study helps to provide a "big-picture" analysis of how the participating PSO employees conduct the decision-making process surrounding their CSR partnerships. In the form of internal and external priorities, qualitative data expanded upon the quantitative data's results concerning influence of social responsibilities. For example, the desire for community impact can be associated with the philanthropic responsibilities category, whereas considerations of public perception and the social landscape lean more toward expected ethical/moral responsibilities. Perhaps as a reflection of the social responsibility rankings demonstrated within the quantitative data, the interviews featured hardly any discussion about legal or economic considerations. In fact, the only time that financial responsibilities were mentioned in the conversation was when it was directly associated with impact measurement. Nonetheless,

the desire for CSR partnership metrics can be associated with an organization's economic

responsibility to remain profitable and contribute resources responsibly, whereas the need

to manage partnership expectations may sometimes be aligned with a PSO's legal

responsibility to fulfill any legal obligations set forth in a partnership agreement. It

should be noted that these associations are not mutually exclusive and do include some

overlap; for instance, compiling metrics can also help to improve community impact

within future CSR efforts.

Not surprisingly, the results surrounding impact of social responsibilities are

similar to Sheth and Babiak's (2010) study, which concluded that participating sport

executives ranked the importance of Carroll's four levels of social responsibility within

their CSR efforts in the following order: ethical, philanthropic, legal and economic. Sheth

and Babiak (2010) made a point of noting that their rankings were reversed when

compared to Carroll's (1979) four levels of CSR, which is a result that also must be

highlighted for this research. Whereas Carroll (1979) argued, "the first and foremost

social responsibility of business is economic in nature" and that gaining a profit must

then adhere to any legal framework, this research speculates that PSOs consider their

economic and legal social responsibilities the least when identifying and implementing

CSR partnerships (p. 500). It may not be too out of the ordinary to see notions of

philanthropy and ethics outweigh any legal or economic concerns in the sport CSR space,

considering external and influential stakeholders like the public and media seem to spend

a great deal of their time analyzing the actual philanthropic impact and ethics behind

major sports leagues' CSR efforts.

Parts of this study also worked to fill a gap in the literature by addressing notions of authenticity and attempting to define what that means within the context of CSR partnerships. Even though the data is limited in its applicability, it illustrates that authenticity does play a role within the respondents' thought-process toward the identification and implementation of partnerships, and that certain key elements (e.g., relatable, alignment with organizational mission, collaboration and consistency) can be embraced as authentic CSR partnership practices. Yet, an important question that arises from this component of the research is: why? What is it about the notion of authenticity that attracts organizations like the NFL, NBA and MLB? Considering the survey and interview results, it is possible these PSOs want the public to associate qualities like passion and honesty with their brand. Stakeholders' own passions may drive the creation of a particular CSR partnership, too. It is also possible that the characteristic of "visibility enacted within the community" (Beckman et al., 2009) doesn't just encourage PSOs to do their research and actively engage, but it also has the ability to introduce the organization to a new market. Hopefully, additional research can help to further shed some light on these "whys."

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This study is limited by a low participation rate and, thus, cannot be confidently generalized to the larger population of all PSOs. As the target population was comprised of PSO employees who are directly involved in their league or team CSR efforts, future research may aim to further investigate organizational priorities and the decision-making process by comparing the CSR executives' views with the assessments of their league's

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C-suite level stakeholders concerning social responsibility initiatives and partnerships. In addition, 38% of this study's survey respondents categorized themselves as "Coordinators." While there are indeed some coordinators who have worked with their PSO for a long time and understand all the "in's" and "out's" of their department's CSR efforts, it is also possible that they may not have as much experience, thus encouraging future research to involve a greater percentage of senior leadership in order to collect more insightful data. Another opportunity for the focus to extend beyond this study's population would be to perhaps compare and contrast the CSR priorities of team sport organizations and individual sport organizations.

If the study were to be replicated in the future with a larger sample size, perhaps the survey questions could be adapted to a more sports-oriented phrasing rather than the universal statements adapted from Carroll's (1991) description of the four social responsibilities. Future research may also implement a forced-choice survey scale by removing the neutral "Neither Disagree or Agree" option, as this might result in more genuine feedback. Additionally, it could be assumed that on some level, the method of conducting interviews via telephone affected the type of information shared. If the questions had been included in the online survey or even e-mailed, it is possible that responses may have differed in terms of depth should some participants feel they can answer at their own pace rather than in a real-time, audio-recorded setting.

Respondents in this study also placed a high importance on metrics; therefore it might be valuable for future research to analyze how PSOs are measuring the impact of their CSR initiatives and/or partnerships. For instance, it may be inquired whether PSOs

have established specific objectives surrounding their CSR and whether they have the ability to provide evidence indicating the effectiveness of a program.

Furthermore, the emerging concept of authentic CSR opens the door to more research within the sport industry, perhaps beginning with in-depth case studies similar to Heinze et al.'s (2014) examination of the Detroit Lions. This analysis could even extend to sport diplomacy programs that are not managed by a PSO. Ultimately, it is necessary to explore the question, "Why is authenticity important to SCSR initiatives?" in order to promote discussion surrounding not only the intended and actual beneficiaries, but also the overall legitimacy of such efforts.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to investigate PSOs' internal perceptions of their CSR partnerships, as well as attempt to demystify the concept of authenticity as it relates to their CSR efforts and partnerships. The results cannot be confidently generalized to the larger PSO population due to low response rate. However, they do suggest that the participating respondents feel positive toward the identification and implementation of their CSR partnerships, during which the integration of authenticity is valued and ethical and philanthropic social responsibilities have a greater impact on these processes compared to legal and economic considerations. In regards to the thought-process behind identifying strategic and authentic CSR partnerships, findings propose that the respondents prioritize making an impact on the community, partnering with experts in the field, considering the current social landscape, targeting CSR causes and partnerships that resonate with stakeholders and ensuring alignment with the organizational mission. On

the other hand, participants emphasize the management of expectations, collaboration as an active partner, implementation of consistency in their CSR dealings, and measurement of the effort's (and consequently the partnership's) impact when implementing these CSR partnerships. The overall findings suggest it is with these priorities and goals that the PSO respondents feel they can enter into CSR partnerships that are mutually beneficial, impactful and authentic.

Appendices

Appendix A: Likert Scale Survey Questions (via SurveyMonkey.com)

The purpose of this survey is to assess professional sports organizations' internal perception of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnerships and to further explore the significance of authentic collaboration. The following questions are based off of Archie B. Carroll's (1991) pyramid model of CSR, which argues that firms possess four distinct categories of social responsibility: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. The survey also features questions as they relate to Beckman, Colwell, and Cunningham's (2009) concept of authentic CSR.

Please note that your participation in this 10-20min. survey is completely voluntary and will remain anonymous. You may withdraw at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Many thanks for your time and participation.

1. Please select the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the identification and implementation of your league or team's CSR partnerships:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
My league/team identifies appropriate partnerships for the purposes of our CSR initiatives.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My league/team successfully implements CSR partnerships.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships demonstrate our passion for the cause.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to generate a profit.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to comply with various federal, state, and local regulations.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships are consistent with expectations of societal mores and ethical norms.	○	○	○	○	○	○

It is important that our CSR partnerships voluntarily enhance a community's quality of life.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that transparency is demonstrated within our CSR partnerships.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to maintain a strong and competitive financial position.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to fulfill our legal obligations.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships demonstrate good corporate citizenship (i.e. doing what is expected morally or ethically).	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships are authentic.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships encourage managers and employees to participate in voluntary and charitable activities within their local communities.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that consistency is demonstrated within our CSR partnerships.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to maintain a high level of operating efficiency.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships are consistent with expectations of government and law.	○	○	○	○	○	○

It is important that our CSR partnerships recognize and respect new and/or evolving ethical/moral norms adopted by society.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to perform in a manner consistent with the philanthropic and charitable expectations of society.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships demonstrate our visibility within the community.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships are tailored specifically to the needs of local stakeholders.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to perform in a manner consistent with maximizing earnings per share.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to provide goods and services that at least meet minimal legal requirements.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to prevent ethical norms from being compromised in order to achieve corporate goals.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships help provide assistance to the fine and performing arts.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is important that our CSR partnerships are central to the team/league mission.	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. I am associated with the following professional sport organization:

○ NBA

○ NFL

○ MLB

3. Please identify the amount of time you have worked for your league/team.

○ Less than 1 year

○ 1-2 years

○ 2-3 years

○ 3-4 years

○ 4-5 years

○ 5 years or more

○ Other (please specify)

[ ]

4. Which of the following most closely matches your job title?

○ Entry Level

○ Coordinator

○ Manager

○ Senior Manager

○ Director

○ Vice President

○ Senior Vice President

○ C Level Executive (CTO, COO, CMO, etc.)

○ President or CEO

○ Owner

○ Other (please specify)

[ ]

5. What is your age?

○ 18-24 years old

○ 25-34 years old

○ 35-44 years old

○ 45-54 years old

○ 55-64 years old

○ 65-74 years old

○ 75 years or older

6. To which racial or ethnic group(s) do you most identify?

☐ African-American (non-Hispanic)

☐ Asian/Pacific Islanders

☐ Caucasian (non-Hispanic)

☐ Latino or Hispanic

☐ Native American or Aleut

☐ Prefer not to disclose

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

7. I identify my gender as...

☐ Man

☐ Woman

☐ Transgender

☐ Prefer not to disclose

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

8. If you are interested in participating in a 15-20 minute phone interview regarding your league's or your particular team's CSR partnerships and efforts, please place your preferred contact information below. I will reach out to you within the next few days to discuss details and address any questions you may have. Many thanks in advance!

[   ]

Appendix B: Survey Question Key

EC = Economic / L = Legal / ETH = Ethical / P = Philanthropic

EC1	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to generate a profit.
EC2	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to maintain a strong and competitive financial position.
EC3	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to maintain a high level of operating efficiency.
EC4	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to perform in a manner consistent with maximizing earnings per share.
L1	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to comply with various federal, state, and local regulations.
L2	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to fulfill our legal obligations.
L3	It is important that our CSR partnerships are consistent with expectations of government and law.
L4	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to provide goods and services that at least meet minimal legal requirements.
ETH1	It is important that our CSR partnerships are consistent with expectations of societal mores and ethical norms.
ETH2	It is important that our CSR partnerships demonstrate good corporate citizenship (i.e., doing what is expected morally or ethically).
ETH3	It is important that our CSR partnerships recognize and respect new and/or evolving ethical/moral norms adopted by society.
ETH4	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to prevent ethical norms from being compromised in order to achieve corporate goals.
P1	It is important that our CSR partnerships voluntarily enhance a community's quality of life.
P2	It is important that our CSR partnerships encourage managers and employees to participate in voluntary and charitable activities within their local communities.
P3	It is important that our CSR partnerships help us to perform in a manner consistent with the philanthropic and charitable expectations of society.
P4	It is important that our CSR partnerships help provide assistance to the fine and performing arts.

Appendix B: Survey Question Key (continued)

A = Authentic

A1	It is important that our CSR partnerships demonstrate our passion for the cause.
A2	It is important that transparency is demonstrated within our CSR partnerships.
A3	It is important that our CSR partnerships are authentic.
A4	It is important that consistency is demonstrated within our CSR partnerships.
A5	It is important that our CSR partnerships demonstrate our visibility within the community.
A6	It is important that our CSR partnerships are tailored specifically to the needs of local stakeholders.
A7	It is important that our CSR partnerships are central to the team/league mission.

Appendix C: Survey E-Mail Cover Letter

Dear Potential Participant:

My name is Leah Kartun and I am a Sport & Recreation Studies graduate student at George Mason University. For the purposes of completing my master's thesis, I have chosen to investigate the topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR) within professional sport organizations (PSOs). Sports are unique in that they provide a platform to unite diverse communities and raise awareness for a multitude of issues such as health and wellness, gender equality, disability and more. Moreover, the implementation of CSR initiatives has become associated with PSOs' actions as caring and impactful corporate citizens. Recent studies have identified partnership and authenticity as two key strategies within PSOs' CSR initiatives. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how PSOs view the identification and implementation of strategic and authentic partnerships within their CSR activities.

I am inviting you to participate because you work directly in a role that oversees, manages or coordinates a league or a particular team's CSR initiatives. All feedback will remain anonymous and confidential, and there are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

As this study is largely dependent on locating available participants who are directly involved in your league's or team's CSR initiatives, I am also writing to ask whether you are willing to identify other colleagues who may be able to participate in this research. If you would like to pass along the survey to other potential participants, please feel free to share this letter and the survey link below. You are under no obligation to share this information and whether or not you share this survey will not affect your relationship with the researcher nor the study as a whole.

At the end of the survey, there is a section where you may voluntarily elect to input your contact information should you wish to participate in the telephone interview portion of the study. The data collected throughout the entire study will not only help to clarify PSOs' internal perception of their CSR partnerships, but it will also help to provide a better understanding as to the thought-process behind these partnerships and notions of authenticity. If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at LKartun@gmu.edu or (847) 858-7645.

Please note the completion of the survey will indicate your willingness to participate in this first phase of the study. Should you voluntarily agree to participate in the survey, please access the following link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XCR2W2Z.

Many thanks for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavors.

Sincerely,
Leah Kartun
IRBNet 885889-1

Appendix D: Phone Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and what it means to you and your league/team.

2. Can you give me some examples of how you have successfully integrated partnerships into your CSR efforts? Are there any examples of unsuccessful initiatives?

3. Are there any particular social issues/causes where you find partnerships to be most beneficial and/or best integrated?

4. When identifying a partnership for your CSR initiatives, what internal motivators/pressures do you consider? What about external motivators?

5. When implementing/executing a CSR partnership, what internal motivators/pressures do you consider? What about external items/pressures?

6. Tell me about the concept of "authenticity" and what it means to you within the context of CSR partnerships.

7. Is there anything you'd like to improve in regards to the CSR partnerships that are identified and implemented by your league/team?

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Biography

Leah Kartun graduated from Highland Park High School, Highland Park, IL, in 2007. She received her Bachelor of Arts from New York University in 2011 and worked in television production for a brief time. Her lifelong interest and participation in sports led her to pursue a graduate degree in Sport and Recreation Studies at George Mason University.