Dependency Theory Reloaded: Exploring Baseball in the Dominican Republic

Sarah Nass
Western Kentucky University, sarah.nass840@topper.wku.edu

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DEPENDENCY THEORY RELOADED: EXPLORING BASEBALL IN THE
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Art with
Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By:
Sarah Naas

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Western Kentucky University
2016

CE/T Committee:
Kenneth Payne, Advisor
Paula Upright
Kristy Cartwright

Approved by

Advisor
Department of Public Relations
ABSTRACT

Latin America’s presence in Major League Baseball has grown rapidly in recent years. The increase of players from the Dominican Republic can no longer be ignored. But why is Major League Baseball in the Dominican Republic? What has been the impact of Major League Baseball’s player development strategies and tactics on the people and culture of the Dominican Republic? Does the Dominican Republic need Major League Baseball to be successful? An ethnographic study was conducted in an attempt to answer these questions. This study examines the relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic. Examining this relationship using the dependency theory shows that Major League Baseball is hindering the development of the Dominican Republic as a whole. Further research regarding any political involvement with Major League Baseball is needed when examining this relationship. Dependency theory is an economic theory; therefore, research regarding specific economic impacts from Major League Baseball is also needed.

Keywords: Dominican Republic, baseball, Major League Baseball, Dependency Theory
Dedicated to the untold stories of young Dominican baseball players.

May you one day get your chance to shine; until then, keep playing the game you love.
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VITA
April 10, 1994..............................................................Born – Paducah, Kentucky
2012.........................Ballard Memorial High School, Valedictorian, Barlow, Kentucky
2015..................CIEE Study Abroad Program, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major: Sport Management

Major: Public Relations
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

“SARAH, SARAH!! La Americana se aqui!” they yelled as they sprinted across the field to meet me at the fence. Some of them barefoot; others wearing ripped shirts. But all of them ready to play. On a field littered with trash, young boys line the fence, waiting for their turn to bat. My eight-year-old teammates create the lineup and make sure I know when it’s my turn up. Hand in hand, I am pulled to my place on the field. I stand at second base; the left fielder from the game behind me stands two feet to my left. A pop fly from my field interferes with the game to our right. One hundred and twenty boys, seven games, two coaches, one love: baseball.

In the streets there are young boys hitting bottle caps with broomsticks; they race home from school just to pick up their glove and a ball. The Dominican Republic: where boys are born with a ball in hand. “When I grow up I want to be a baseball player.” David Ortiz, Manny Ramirez, and Pedro Martinez are just a few of the big names these boys look up to. Their dream is to make it to the major leagues.

As an avid sports fan, it has been my dream to study sports internationally. Through a study abroad program, I was given the opportunity to travel to the Dominican Republic and study baseball. Prior to traveling abroad, I began researching baseball in the Dominican Republic, excited about the opportunity to come. In the world of baseball it has become difficult to ignore Latin America’s presence. Since Ozzie Virgil’s debut in a Major League Baseball game in 1956, there have been hundreds of Dominicans in the
major leagues (Yoder, 2015). In 2015, 230 players (26.5%) were born outside of the United States (Opening Day Rosters Feature 230 Players Born Outside the U.S., 2015). Last year alone there were 83 players from the Dominican Republic of the 868 players playing in Major Leagues (Opening Day Rosters Feature 230 Players Born Outside the U.S., 2015). Dominicans and other foreign born players have an even larger presence in the minor leagues. In 2012, 46.47 percent of players with minor league contracts were born outside the 50 states (Percentage of Foreign Players Rises, 2012).

These numbers prove the overwhelming Latin American presence in Major League Baseball. But it was through my time on the island that I realized baseball is so much more than a sport in the Dominican Republic. There are four guiding principles in the Dominican Republic: God, Country, Liberty, and Baseball. The small island is producing more players than any other foreign country. Young Dominican boys have been playing baseball for years on dirt fields using sticks as bats. The love of the game permeates the culture. Baseball gives Dominicans hope and something to strive for; for others like Pedro Martinez, David Ortiz, and Manny Ramirez to name a few, it has provided a way out of the country.

While the love of the game is certainly important, it’s not the only reason many players from the Dominican Republic make it to the major leagues. Although the economy has improved over the last few years, the Dominican Republic is still one of the poorest countries in Latin America. The lack of available jobs, as well as low wages make life in the Dominican Republic difficult. Major League Baseball has used this to its advantage – talented Dominican players come cheap.
In the late 1970s major league teams started building academies in the Dominican Republic. The Los Angeles Dodgers and the Toronto Blue Jays were the first teams to do so. MLB academies are the second step for a Dominican pursuing a professional baseball career. After playing little league, the goal is to sign with a professional team and move to an academy. The academies on the island offer Dominicans a chance to continue developing as players, in hopes to be called up to the United States to play in the minor league system.

Today, every team has an academy in the Dominican Republic. Major League Baseball’s presence on the island has exploded in recent years. All 30 teams have built academies on the island in an effort to sign cheap talent and potentially bring these players to the United States to play in the Major Leagues. Signing with an academy on the island is every boy’s dream. Many boys sport their favorite professional team’s logo on a hat or shirt; others will simply tell you within the first few seconds of meeting you about their favorite player in Major League Baseball.

Players who are sign with these academies in the Dominican Republic are promised food, healthcare, and training, as well as a place to live. They are given a signing bonus, usually much less than players in the United States. Once signed with a team, these players are officially professional baseball players. They participate in the Dominican Summer League, a branch affiliated with Minor League Baseball. But before these players are given a chance to sign with a team, they must first develop as an overall player. It is here that little leagues and buscónes come into the picture. Little leagues all over the country are full of young boys pursuing careers in baseball. I was fortunate enough to work with two little leagues on the island.
Little leagues provide boys with the opportunity to play baseball with their peers; buscónes provide these same boys with the opportunity to develop and train while pursuing a professional career in the baseball industry. Oftentimes, a player’s buscón will take anywhere from 20-40% of a player’s signing bonus. While this is a substantially higher percentage than what agents make in the United States, the role of a buscón is very different in the Dominican Republic. Buscónes act as scouts, trainers, and agents for young boys. Once a buscón discovers a talented Dominican player around 14 or 15 years old, the player often lives with the buscón and trains while the buscón arranges tryouts for the boy once he is 16, the required age to sign internationally. While there are many allegations of corruption in this system, buscónes provide a necessary service to the world of baseball in the Dominican Republic.

The Dominican baseball system is rather complex, relying on many different people for various things. Unfortunately, the vast majority of players do not make it to the majors and many of them are released from their minor league teams early on. In the Dominican, education is placed on the back burner. The push to make it to the Major Leagues has somewhat pushed many young Dominican boys to drop out of school at 14 or 15 years old to pursue a career in the baseball industry. From this perspective, the likelihood of making it to the top seems slim. But on the other hand, the bonuses given to the young players who are signed with teams in the Dominican Republic, as well as the jobs the academies offer, send money into poor Dominican neighborhoods. Major League Baseball is inadvertently pouring millions of dollars into the island, while also reaping the benefits of a few very talented players who make it to the United States.
Statement of the Problem

Baseball in the Dominican Republic is a unique system. Major League Baseball’s presence could potentially be hindering the country from developing further on an international scale.

Background and Need

Dominicans have made their presence known on the professional level over the years, starting with Ozzie Virgil playing with the New York Giants in 1956. Since then, thousands of Dominicans have worked their way through the system and made it to the United States, both on the minor and major league levels. Dominicans make up the largest population of foreign born players in the major leagues.

Major League Baseball continues to rely on foreign, more specifically Dominican players to grow professional baseball. Because of this, Major League Baseball’s presence on the island can no longer be ignore. Today every Major League Baseball team has a baseball academy in the Dominican Republic. Every year approximately 10% of active Major League Baseball players are from the Dominican Republic, about 120 players each year (Players from the DR, n.d.). The number of Dominicans in the world of baseball continues to increase, as does Major League Baseball’s presence in the Dominican Republic.

This paper will examine the relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic. It begins with some background about baseball in the Dominican Republic and Major League Baseball’s presence on the island. Then, it examines the literature regarding this topic and how scholars have previously examined the
relationship. This is followed by my own interpretation of the relationship based on my firsthand experience on the island. Finally, the paper examines how the relationship can be examined with the use of the Dependency Theory.

**Rationale**

Baseball is quickly becoming an international sport. We can no longer ignore the rapid growth of foreign players in Major League Baseball. Because of this growth, the US media has taken an interest in the Dominican baseball academies. The media has been flooded with stories of young Dominican boys chasing the American dream by “making it” in the majors. But we can no longer ignore the situation in the Dominican Republic. The relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic is one of the most unique relationships in the sports industry. This relationship can no longer be ignored. There is a possibility that Major League Baseball is hindering development within the Dominican Republic.

**Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic.

**Research Questions/Hypothesis**

1. Why is Major League Baseball in the Dominican Republic?

2. What has been the impact of Major League Baseball’s player development strategies and tactics on the people and culture of the Dominican Republic?
3. Is Major League Baseball’s presence in the Dominican Republic a bad thing?
4. Does the Dominican Republic need Major League Baseball to be successful?
5. Is baseball Dominican?

Hypothesis: Major League Baseball relies heavily on the Dominican Republic for cheap labor. Major League Baseball is extracting human capital from the Dominican Republic. The relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic can be examined through dependency theory: Major League Baseball is dependent upon the Dominican Republic for a resource (players) and the Dominican Republic will continue to remain underdeveloped because of this relationship.

Methods

I will examine the relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic through the dependency theory. I will travel to the Dominican Republic to conduct an ethnography, where I will observe life on the island and the baseball industry.

Limitations

My lack of Spanish knowledge was the biggest limitation of the study. The short time frame was also a limitation in this study.
CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

From a young age I have been an avid baseball fan. Through the years it has been difficult to ignore the increase of Latin American players in the league. I have always been a Cardinals fan and, ultimately, a huge Albert Pujols fan. His background sparked a huge interest for me regarding baseball and the Dominican Republic.

In recent years, we have witnessed an immense amount of journalistic coverage of baseball in the Dominican Republic. With reports ranging from simple player profiles to exposure of inadequate living quarters among the academies, the world of journalism has entertained us with stories from the Dominican Republic for several years. Documentaries, autobiographies, and interviews, as well as simple news articles have flooded the United States to the point where we can no longer ignore Dominican baseball.

The media regularly reports on the dysfunctional and incomprehensible practices surrounding Dominican baseball. Reports include unstable environments surrounding the signing of players, as well as the use of performance enhancing drugs. These reports give rationale to Major League Baseball’s presence in the Dominican Republic, as well as explain America’s concern for young Dominican baseball players. Journalistic coverage of baseball in the Dominican Republic has widely varied in both content and accuracy. The stories told by these journalists only portray a small portion of what is truly happening in the Dominican Republic. Baseball development in the Dominican Republic
is much more than the “untold stories” of poor Dominican children. While many of these stories are true, scholars agree that the portrayal left by these stories of certain aspects within Dominican baseball is far from the truth (Yoder, 2016).

While we have read numerous stories about Dominican baseball, the academic study of baseball in the Dominican Republic is still fairly new. Some have told the story of how Dominicans make it to the big leagues and the path they take; others have explored the historical presence of baseball in the Dominican Republic and how this history has affected Major League Baseball’s presence in the country. The relationship between baseball and politics in the Dominican Republic have also been studied in depth.

Alan Klein, professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Northeastern University, spent his career examining the intersection of culture, politics and sport. His research has taken him to study baseball in the Dominican Republic, where he has publications about baseball in the Dominican Republic. Klein’s first book, Sugarball: The American Game, The Dominican Dream, looks at baseball in the Dominican Republic in comparison to the United States. His most recent book, Dominican Baseball: New Pride, Old Prejudice, Klein discusses player development in the Dominican Republic and the system young boys must work through in order to make it to the professional level.

Klein’s study of baseball using the global commodity chain sparked an interest during my research. It was through his book Dominican Baseball: New Pride, Old Prejudice that I was further intrigued by the system that is currently in place in the Dominican Republic.

Rob Ruck is a professor in the History Department at the University of Pittsburg and the author of Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game
and The Tropic of Baseball: Baseball in the Dominican Republic. In Raceball, Ruck examines baseball in the Dominican Republic from the vantage point of black America and the Caribbean. Through this examination, Ruck came to one realization: “Baseball has never been stronger as a business, never weaker as a game” (Ruck, 2012). Once in the Dominican Republic, I began reading this book. This statement challenged me to further examine the situation in the country and to look at baseball from a business standpoint, which led me to the application of my theory discussed later.

Rob Ruck examines the integration of black and Caribbean players into Major League Baseball and what effects the integration has had on the communities.

“Although long overdue and a catalyst to social change, integration cost black and Caribbean societies control over their own sporting lives. It changed the meaning of sport, and not usually for the better. While channeling black and Latino athletes into major league baseball, integration did little for the communities they left behind. On the contrary, it actively destroyed or weakened institutions in the black community and the Caribbean” (Ruck, 2011, Introduction, para. 21).

Ruck argues that this integration within Major League Baseball is “weakening” the communities left behind. Major League Baseball’s presence in Caribbean countries has had a very negative effect. “By imposing its imperial will on black America and the Caribbean, Major League Baseball has achieved unprecedented prosperity, but gutted the game at the grassroots along the way. Baseball has never been stronger as a business, never weaker as a game” (Ruck, 2011, Introduction, para. 22). Ruck’s analysis of
baseball looks at communities in the Dominican Republic and evaluates the impacts
Major League Baseball has had overall.

April Yoder is an assistant professor in the History Department at the University
of New Haven. While pursuing her Doctorate, Yoder studied baseball in the Dominican
Republic, asking the question about how Dominicans used baseball to express their
expectations for democracy. Professor Yoder was one of my two professors during my
time on the island and I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to discuss my
research with her. It was through her guidance that I was able to finally pinpoint my
theory when examining the relationship between Major League Baseball and the
Dominican Republic.

The current trend among those who have studied baseball in the Dominican
Republic is baseball’s position within global capitalism, as well as the exploitation and
inequality within the system. The question of governance and Major League Baseball’s
responsibilities in the Dominican Republic is also a common emphasis within the
literature.

According to Alan Klein, in order to understand Dominican baseball and the
“transnational system it has become,” we must first “grasp its links to Major League
Baseball.” “Understanding Dominican baseball is no different, and grasping the
Dominican game through its links to Major League Baseball enables us to gain a sense of
what a dynamic and seamless transnational system it has become” (Klein, 2014, Global-
Local Confluence, para. 1). Klein claims that the relationship between Major League
Baseball and Dominican baseball has benefited both partners. “North America's game
has continued to remain healthy, while Dominican baseball has emerged as a major
domestic industry, rivaling agriculture” (Klein, 2014, Global-Local Confluence, para. 1). Klein argues that through this relationship, Major League Baseball has grown both as an industry, but also on an international level. Without this relationship, one could argue that Major League Baseball would lack an international presence.

Major League Baseball is so deeply integrated in the Dominican Republic that in many ways they no longer act as two separate entities, but rather a single unit (Klein, 2014). This idea that Dominican baseball works hand in hand with Major League Baseball is only true in some cases. There is no simple way to grasp the transnational nature of what Major League Baseball - Dominican relations have come to be (Klein, 2014). Klein argues that the “modern era” of Dominican baseball did not begin until Major League Baseball made a “structurally significant presence” in the Dominican Republic (Klein, 2014). This presence he is referring to is the academy system. Major League Baseball has made its presence known on the island through the development of all 30 academies as well as the opening of the international office in Santo Domingo.

The relationship between the island and the sports organization is one of the most unique relationships in sports. The system players must go through in order to make it to the major leagues is complex, with many moving parts. Klein outlines the “player commodity chain” Dominicans must work through to make it to the top: Youth Amateurs, Buscónes, Academies, Rookie Leagues, A League, AA League, AAA League, Major Leagues (Klein, 2014). Each step is a “production site” that brings players and trainers or coaches together during this journey of development (as a player) (Klein, 2014). This process is unique in that Major League Baseball heavily relies on Dominicans to keep the chain linked.
In his book *Dominican Baseball: New Pride, Old Prejudice*, Alan Klein (2014) looks at Dominican baseball using the concept of a global-local confluence. “…grasping the Dominican game through its links to Major League Baseball enables us to gain a sense of what a dynamic and seamless transnational system it has become” (Global-Local Confluence, para. 1). Dominican baseball plays a huge role in Major League Baseball today. There are hundreds of Dominican players in the system ranging from the academy system in the Dominican Republic all the way to the Major Leagues. While looking at baseball through the eyes of Major League Baseball will allow us to examine the relationship at the global level, we cannot forget about the local levels as well.

To some, the baseball industry is viewed simply as “Dominicans supplying labor to an industry” (Klein, 2014, Global-Local Confluence, para. 7).

“Defining success in terms of a neoliberal era commodity chain wherein Dominicans supply either partially or wholly assembled ballplayers to Major League Baseball merely continues a century of Americans’ extracting Dominican resources cheaply for profit elsewhere” (Klein, 2014, Global-Local Confluence, para. 7).

This view looks at baseball in the Dominican Republic from a North American perspective. Major League Baseball is simply extracting talent and leaving the country to pick up their mess. But Ruck claims that Dominicans do not see baseball the same way. “Most Dominicans appreciate baseball for sport’s sake or as a profession, but more and
more are coming to see the game as a force for national development” (Ruck, 2011, Epilogue, para. 12).

While there are differing views as to Major League Baseball’s motive, scholars are able to agree on one thing: Dominicans’ opinion on baseball. “They see an Major League Baseball-driven world that gives them very few formal opportunities to gain entry and one that fails to consider the manner in which Dominican life makes it almost impossible to comply and succeed at the same time” (Klein, 2014, Global-Local Confluence, para. 3). The lack of economic opportunity, according to academic sources, is also a driving factor for Dominicans to pursue a career in baseball. “...governments and populations of baseball-loving countries like the Dominican Republic were happy to offer up their native sons for the chance to ‘raise the flag high’ on foreign shores” (Yoder, 2016, Dominican Innovation in MLB, para. 1). Baseball in the Dominican Republic is viewed as a “way out” of their current economic situation.

The idea that baseball could be considered labor is the first question that must be addressed.

“As ‘labor,’ baseball players are unique in three very important ways: (1) They are both the commodity being produced and the producer of the commodity; (2) they constitute a radical departure from conventional views of Third World labor in that foreign labor is typically characterized as abundant, unskilled, and cheap, but Dominican players are the converse (i.e., relatively rare, skilled, and very well paid); and (3) the commodities that typically are considered in these kinds of
analyses are not human beings” (Klein, 2014, Single Global Commodity Chain or Multiple Commodity Chains, para. 2).

The study of Dominican players within this idea of the global commodity chain is much more complex than studying say cars, clothes or electronics. “The commodities produced are sentient beings who...are cognizant and capable of altering the very conditions of their own production” (Klein, 2014, Single Global Commodity Chain or Multiple Commodity Chains, para. 4).

While the global commodity chain is a complex way to look at the relationship, Klein implies that there is a simpler way to examine the chain.

“Like other global commodity production schemes, there are multiple sites in different parts of the world, but in the production of baseball players (or any high-end athlete), the sites are socially and culturally determined, not simply operations performed on inert objects. Rather, value is added by working through a socially formed person who responds to the process (training) in a complex and negotiated way” (Klein, 2014, The Dominican Chain’s Links, para. 1).

Baseball in the Dominican Republic adds a new twist to the idea of a production line, producing professional baseball players through this commodity chain is comparable to the production of an inanimate object. The only difference is the “object” being produced is human. The resource being used is a form of labor, playing baseball.
Dominican baseball and Major League Baseball’s presence in the country are both complex situations. But examining these situations as they relate to the global economy brings a different twist into the mix. The informal economy plays a large part in Klein’s examination of Dominican baseball.

“Because of this, the World Bank considers the informal economy a persistent and growing feature of developing nations and a destabilizing influence: ‘A high level of informality also can undermine the rule of law and governance. The fact that a large share of the population is openly ignoring laws, regulations and taxes can weaken the respect citizens have for the state.’ Of course, institutions such as the World Bank also conveniently neglect to mention that people end up in the informal economy because they have been socially jettisoned, but the potential for opposition is clear” (Klein, 2014, Steven Gregory’s Dominican Work, para. 3).

The colonization of baseball in the Dominican Republic by Major League Baseball is a common trend within the academic world. However, Alan Klein decided to look at the relationship through the global commodity chain. Sociologists have used this model to look at how commodities are manufactured and move transnationally (Klein, 2014). Before Klein examined the global commodity chain, he acknowledged the idea of the Marxist-based dependency theory (Klein, 2014). In his opinion, the dependency theory did not fit this relationship.

The short mention of the Dependency Theory in Alan Klein’s book, sparked an interest during my research. Why was it that Klein dismissed this theory and instead
chose to examine the relationship using the global commodity chain?

**Dependency Theory: An Introduction**

Dependency theory was developed in the late 1950s by Raul Prebisch, the Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America. Their studies suggested that economic activity in the richer countries often led to serious economic problems in the poorer countries. His initial explanation for this situation was simple: poor countries exported primary commodities to the rich countries who then manufactured products out of those commodities and sold them back to the poorer countries. Poorer countries would never be earning enough from their export earnings to pay for their imports (Ferraro, 2008).

Dependency theory was viewed as a possible way of explaining the persistent poverty of the poorer countries. The traditional neoclassical approach said the poorer countries were late in coming to solid economic practices and that as soon as they learned the techniques of modern economics, then the poverty would begin to subside. Marxists theorists viewed the persistent poverty as a consequence of capitalist exploitations (Ferraro, 2008). Then came the world systems approach which argued that the poverty was a direct consequence of the evolution of the international political economy into a fairly rigid division of labor which favored the rich and penalized the poor (Ferraro, 2008).

While Dependency theory has since been dismissed from the world of economics, at the time debates among the liberal reformers, the Marxists, and the world systems theorists were intense. To this day there are still points of serious disagreements among
the various strains of dependency theorists and because of this, it is not possible to say there is only one unified theory of dependency (Ferraro, 2008). But regardless of the disagreements, there are still some core themes among most dependency theorists.

“Dependency can be defined as an explanation of the economic development of a state in terms of the external influences--political, economic, and cultural--on national development policies” (Sunkel, 1996, How Can One Define Dependency Theory, para. 2).

Dependency is a historical condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy such that it favors some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economics. Essentially, it is a situation in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansions of another economy, to which their own is subjected (Santos, 1970).

**3 common features most dependency theorists share.**

1. Dependency characterizes the international system as comprised of two sets of states, variously described as dominant/dependent, center/periphery or metropolitan/satellite (Ferraro, 2008).

2. The assumption that external forces are of singular importance to the economic activities within the dependent states. Some external forces included are multinational corporations, international commodity markets, foreign assistance, communications, and any other means by which the advanced industrialized countries can represent their economic interests abroad (Ferraro, 2008).
3. The definitions of dependency all indicate that the relations between dominant and dependent states are dynamic because the interactions between the two sets of states tend to not only reinforce but also intensify the unequal patterns. Moreover, dependency is a very deep seated historical process, rooted in the internationalization of capitalism (Ferraro, 2008). Dependency is an ongoing process:

“Latin America is today, and has been since the sixteenth century, part of an international system dominated by the now-developed nations...Latin underdevelopment is the outcome of a particular series of relationships to the international system” (Bodenheimer, 1971, How Can One Define Dependency Theory, para. 7).

Basically, dependency theory attempts to explain the underdeveloped state of many countries in the world by examining patterns of interactions within the world system and arguing that inequality among nations is a huge part of those interactions.

Many dependency theorists believe international capitalism as the motive force behind dependency relationships.

“...historical research demonstrates that contemporary underdevelopment is in large part the historical product of past and continuing economic and other relations between satellite underdeveloped and the now developed metropolitan countries. Furthermore, these relations are an essential part of the capitalist
system on a world scale as a whole” (Frank, 1989, The Structural Context of Dependency, para. 2).

According to this, the capitalist system has enforced a rigid international division of labor which is responsible for the underdevelopment of many areas of the world. The dependent states supply cheap minerals, agricultural commodities, and cheap labor, and also serve as the repositories of surplus capital, obsolescent technologies, and manufactured goods. These functions orient the economies of the dependent states toward the outside: money, goods, and services do flow into dependent states, but the allocation of these resources are determined by the economic interests of the dominant states, and not by the economic interests of the dependent state. This division of labor is ultimately the explanation for poverty and there is little question but that capitalism regard the division of labor as a necessary condition for the efficient allocation of resources.

Economic political power is heavily concentrated and centralized in the industrialized countries, an assumption shared with Marxist theories of imperialism. If this assumption is valid, then any distinction between economic and political power is spurious: governments will take whatever steps are necessary to protect private economic interests, such as those held by multinational corporations.

However, not all dependency theorists are Marxists and one should clearly distinguish between dependency and a theory of imperialism. The Marxists theory of imperialism explains dominant state expansion while the dependency theory explains
underdevelopment. Marxist theories explain the reasons why imperialism occurs, while dependency theories explain the consequences of imperialism.

For the dependency theorists, there are a number of propositions which form the dependency theory, according to Ferraro (2008):

“1. *Underdevelopment* is a condition fundamentally different from *undevelopment*. The latter term simply refers to a condition in which resources are not being used. For example, the European colonists viewed the North American continent as an undeveloped area: the land was not actively cultivated on a scale consistent with its potential. Underdevelopment refers to a situation in which resources are being actively used, but used in a way which benefits dominant states and not the poorer states in which the resources are found.

2. The distinction between underdevelopment and undevelopment places the poorer countries of the world is a profoundly different historical context. These countries are not "behind" or "catching up" to the richer countries of the world. They are not poor because they lagged behind the scientific transformations or the Enlightenment values of the European states. They are poor because they were coercively integrated into the European economic system only as producers of raw materials or to serve as repositories of cheap labor, and were denied the opportunity to market their resources in any way that competed with dominant states.

3. Dependency theory suggests that alternative uses of resources are preferable to the resource usage patterns imposed by dominant states. There is no clear definition of what these preferred patterns might be, but some criteria are invoked. For example,
one of the dominant state practices most often criticized by dependency theorists is export agriculture. The criticism is that many poor economies experience rather high rates of malnutrition even though they produce great amounts of food for export. Many dependency theorists would argue that those agricultural lands should be used for domestic food production in order to reduce the rates of malnutrition.

4. The preceding proposition can be amplified: dependency theorists rely upon a belief that there exists a clear "national" economic interest which can and should be articulated for each country. In this respect, dependency theory actually shares a similar theoretical concern with realism. What distinguishes the dependency perspective is that its proponents believe that this national interest can only be satisfied by addressing the needs of the poor within a society, rather than through the satisfaction of corporate or governmental needs. Trying to determine what is "best" for the poor is a difficult analytical problem over the long run. Dependency theorists have not yet articulated an operational definition of the national economic interest.

5. The diversion of resources over time (and one must remember that dependent relationships have persisted since the European expansion beginning in the fifteenth century) is maintained not only by the power of dominant states, but also through the power of elites in the dependent states. Dependency theorists argue that these elites maintain a dependent relationship because their own private interests coincide with the interests of the dominant states. These elites are typically trained in the dominant states and share similar values and culture with the elites in dominant states. Thus, in a very real sense, a dependency relationship is a "voluntary" relationship. One need
not argue that the elites in a dependent state are consciously betraying the interests of their poor; the elites sincerely believe that the key to economic development lies in following the prescriptions of liberal economic doctrine” (Ferraro, 2008, The Central Propositions of Dependency Theory).

These propositions shape the overall idea of dependency theory. When applying this theory to a situation, one must take these ideas into consideration.
CHAPTER 3:

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

After thoroughly analyzing the literature that exists regarding baseball in the Dominican Republic, I came to the conclusion that I would examine the relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic through an ethnography.

In Klein’s book *Dominican Baseball: New Pride, Old Prejudice*, he argues that performing an ethnography in the Dominican Republic is the best approach to baseball in the country. “The methodology that ethnographers employ excels at uncovering not only how meaning is imbedded in place but also the articulation of parties/agents and institutions at every node of production, distribution, and consumption…That is a path that the study of Dominican baseball needs to pursue” (Klein, 2014, Critique of the GCC, para. 5).

Based on this statement by Klein, I chose to pursue this research through an ethnographic approach, basing my findings on qualitative research. Qualitative research involves the study of social or cultural events. The researcher is usually immersed "in the field," conducting interviews and observing and recording behaviors. With many ethnographies, the researcher conducts interviews to show personal perspectives of the topic at hand. In this particular study I was unable to conduct any interviews or surveys. I chose to not conduct interviews or surveys because I wanted unbiased results; if my subjects were aware of the fact that I was conducting research, their demeanor and attitude may have changed. I wanted to avoid this possibility at all costs.
Because I would be traveling to the Dominican Republic, I felt an ethnography would give me the most flexibility while living in the country. Living with a host family and participating in different site visits would allow me to observe the country, as well as the baseball industry, from an unbiased point of view. Because I would not have access to things such as public records or other quantitative data, I decided to approach the situation from strictly an observational standpoint.

In a study done by Drexel University, researchers conducted a literature survey to find ethnographic studies and to determine key terms in research using ethnographic methods. They identified themes which had been used to support ethnographic methods as a research methodology. These included using ethnographic methods to gain richer insight into the subjects' experiences, to collect authentic data on the subjects' experiences, and to allow flexibility in the methods chosen (Wakimoto, 2013). An ethnography allowed me to immerse myself in the culture and analyze the baseball industry from within.

In this study I will examine the generalizations found in the media, as well as the information found in the literature review, and compare my findings during my time in the country. Through site visits and an internship, I will examine baseball from the perspective of the Dominican Republic. By immersing myself in the culture, I will be able to conduct research from an unbiased, non-ethnocentric view.

I was also able to take pictures during my time abroad. Through these visual aids, I am able to show others what I saw during my research. During my two courses, I was required to write reflective essays based on site visits, readings, and movie critiques. These writings, along with blog posts, were my notes during my research.
For this study I chose to conduct an ethnography because this is what the site required. I faced a language barrier while in the Dominican Republic and because of this, I was not able to conduct any interviews or surveys. In a situation such as this, an ethnographic study allowed me to simply observe my surroundings. If I was to administer a survey while researching, I would immediately become a researcher rather than simply an observer. This could easily lead to changed behaviors towards myself, as well as harm my research.
CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS

During my time in the Dominican Republic, I was enrolled in two college courses: Ethical Issues in Sport Development and Cultural Studies of Caribbean Sport. I was able to learn and reflect on everything the island had to offer in regard to baseball. Through our study abroad program, we were assigned different internships. A few students were able to work with the Major League Baseball academies. One student was an intern at Major League Baseball’s International office in Santo Domingo. Three of us were given the opportunity to work with two little league programs in Manoguayabo, a town in Santo Domingo.

Baseball

In the Streets. Boys are born with a glove and a ball in their hands. They will play baseball in the streets with a stick and a smashed aluminum can. It was more common than not to see a young group of boys in the street playing baseball during the day. There were Major League Baseball team logos all over the city. Many Dominican wore their favorite teams’ apparel regularly. If you asked a random person on the street who their favorite team was, they always had an answer. When asked their favorite player, it was always a major leaguer from the Dominican Republic.

When I flew into the country, I was able to see several baseball fields from the airplane. You could see both dirt lots and actual baseball fields when flying into the
capital. In such a small area, there were so many baseball fields; this helps to show how much baseball means in the Dominican Republic. There is a version of baseball played in the Dominican Republic called vitilla. Vitilla is basically Dominican stickball using a broomstick and a bottle cap. It was very common to see young boys in the streets playing vitilla because it was all they could afford. I was able to experience vitilla first hand while working with one of the little leagues. It is a simple version of baseball, but it is much more difficult. I had such a hard time hitting a bottle cap with a broomstick!

**Little Leagues.** In the Dominican Republic, the first step in baseball is playing for a little league. There are little leagues all over the country. Children at these little leagues can range anywhere from six years old to 14 or 15 years old. Some of the men who run these little leagues only work as a coach; this is their only source of income. One of the coaches I worked with charged his kid $200RD (4 US dollars) a month to play.

Little leagues in the Dominican Republic do not look like little leagues in the United States. In some areas players might be fortunate enough to play against a neighboring little league. But often times there is only one field so all of the boys in the area play on that field. Instead of traveling to a neighboring league, they instead play against other boys at their little league. In a community where the players cannot afford a glove or cleats, the idea of traveling to another city to play a game is not possible.

In the Dominican Republic, little leagues are the first step on the path to the major leagues. Oftentimes, boys play in little leagues from age five or six up to 13 or 14. If a player is good enough, the little league coach will introduce him to a buscón, or
independent trainer. These trainers work with a small number of boys; their job is to develop the player into someone who might be able to make it on the professional level.

One of the little leagues I worked with was run by a man named Daniel. Daniel was a former minor league player. He made his way through the academy system in the Dominican Republic and was chosen to come to the United States to play in the minor leagues. Before Daniel left the country to travel to the United States, someone approached him to see if he would be willing to marry a woman and take her with him to the United States. If they were married, she would also be given a visa to the United States. This person offered to pay Daniel if he agreed and at 19 years old, Daniel did not know the offer was wrong so he agreed to marry her.

Before they left the Dominican Republic, Daniel and this woman were interviewed. The government wanted to make sure their relationship was legitimate. Through this interview process it was found that they did not know each other. Because of this, Daniel lost his chance at a better life in the United States. He did not receive a visa to come to the United States and he was banned from coming to the United States to live or work.

It was through this experience that Daniel decided to work with young children in the Dominican Republic. He felt that it was his responsibility to teach these young boys right from wrong. Daniel took it upon himself to teach his players the importance of an education. Because Daniel pursued baseball, he did not have a solid education to fall back on once he returned to the Dominican Republic. One of the things Daniel does for his players is he rewards them for their performance in the classroom.
Rudy, who was in charge of the other little league, also stressed the importance of education to his players. At Rudy’s little league, if a player is doing poorly in the classroom, he sends them to summer school. He does not allow his players to put baseball before their education. In a culture where education is dismissed at a certain point, men like Daniel and Rudy are crucial in the world of baseball in the Dominican Republic.

Each day, we would spend three hours in the classroom, an hour and a half for each class. After classes ended at 12:00pm, we had an hour to each lunch and then we traveled to our respective internship sites. Typically, we would arrive at Daniel or Rudy’s field around 2:00pm and we would spend anywhere between two to four hours playing with the boys. The schedule was the same Monday through Thursday, leaving the weekends for us to travel. Any site visits took place in the morning during what would have been class time.

Some days there would be up to seven games being played at one time, all overlapping at once. While I was playing second base during my game, the left fielder of the game behind us would be two feet away from me. At Daniel’s, there were two men who oversaw about 120 kids at once. Because of this, the kids would have to coach themselves during their games. The lack of adult supervision also led to no umpires. The boys would act as umpires during their own game. I was amazed at how well these children were able to conduct themselves without any help from their coach.

During my time with Daniel I played with the eight-year-olds and I typically always played second base. At Rudy’s we played with the older boys and I was always in the outfield. My favorite memory of working with the boys was when I was given the
chance to pitch a softball underhanded to the older boys at Rudy’s. Most of the time, in the Dominican Republic, girls do not play baseball or softball. Typically, girls play volleyball. When I was given the chance to pitch a softball to these boys, they were blown away. It was interesting to see them react to a white female pitch a ball underhanded when they were used to a male pitching a baseball overhanded.

**Academies.** Major League Baseball has a large presence in the Dominican Republic. All 30 Major League Baseball teams have baseball academies in the Dominican Republic. These academies are directly affiliated with the major league teams in the US. Once a player signs with an academy, he is officially considered a professional baseball player. These players have the potential to be called up to the states to play in the first level of the minor league system.

Regulations for these academies are left up to the individual teams rather than Major League Baseball as a whole. Because of this, each academies ranges in regard to the amount of money they put into their program on the island. During my time in the Dominican I was able to tour several of the facilities. I saw different weight rooms ranging from something that resembled a hotel gym to that of a professional team’s facility.

Education in the academies varies. The international office in the Dominican Republic now has a department dedicated to the development of education initiatives in the academies on the island. But without standards or regulations to go by, the academies have their own programs in place. Some of these programs include English courses and basic life skills. Others actually give players the opportunity to work on high school courses during their time at the academy.
In the Dominican Republic, players are eligible to sign with major league teams at the age of 16. These players are awarded a signing bonus from the team. Once signed, the players move into the academy where their life becomes eat, sleep, and breathe baseball. The academies make up the Dominican Summer League. This summer league is an opportunity for all of the teams in the Dominican Republic to play against one another.

A typical day at the academy would consist of breakfast, warm ups, one, possibly two games against another team, lunch, classes (English or actual high school courses), workouts, dinner, free time, and then bed. This schedule would be the same each day, allowing little free time and putting more emphasis on baseball rather than education.

Of the players who make it to an academy in the Dominican Republic, very few actually make it to the United States. Players may stay at an academy anywhere from six months to four years. If a player is not called up to the states, they will eventually be released from the team. Players who are released from their academy must return to a broken economic system with little to no education to fall back on.

**Buscónes.** During our time in the Dominican Republic we learned a lot about buscónes, or trainer agents. These trainers are the second step in making it to the professional level. They are viewed as the first line of recruits. Buscónes work with both little league coaches and academies to develop players in an attempt to make produce a professional player.

In the Dominican Republic, the term buscón is somewhat derogatory. It has been twisted to mean something negative: thief, pilferer, or swindlers. But this viewpoint dismisses the work these men do as coaches and trainers on the island. These men are the
ones developing players, not stealing their money or cheating them. We learned that these men would rather be referred to as “independent trainers.”

Independent trainers provide basic needs to the players they work with. This can range anywhere from a place to sleep and food, to clothing and medical care. “Buscónes” are slowly disappearing and independent trainers are taking over the industry. These trainers claim that they are not only investing, they are developing and training the players to ensure they are signed. Buscónes simply take the player and hope he signs; this is where the negative connotation comes from.

Because of the recent developments within the baseball industry in the Dominican Republic, parents are becoming more responsible. This has led to the rise of independent trainers and the decline in buscónes. Parents are not willing to trust just anyone with their child’s life. These independent trainers are more than just a trainer; they are a father figure, as well as a coach. There is more respect in the country for these independent trainers because of the work they do in developing young athletes. Major League teams rely heavily on these independent trainers to find and provide them with talented players to sign.

One of the reasons people view buscónes in a bad light is their history of taking large portions of players’ signing bonuses. Through their time training, the players rely on their trainer for everything: shelter, food, clothing, medical care, and many other things outside of baseball. Because of this, the trainer charges a price. This could range anywhere from 20-40% of a player’s signing bonus. Independent trainers, or buscónes, act as the middle man between player and professional team. The trainer is responsible for setting up any tryouts with the professional teams. Oftentimes trainers lose money
because they are providing for several players at once. If none of their players sign with a professional team, the trainer has lost a lot of money and resources providing for the players.

**International office.** Major League Baseball opened its International Office in Santo Domingo in 2010 and we were able to visit the offices and meet with some of the employees.

The international office in the Dominican Republic has a few different branches within their department: education development, investigation, and social responsibility. Through these three branches, Major League Baseball is trying to develop the baseball industry in the Dominican Republic.

The education department is very new. There is currently one person on staff who has been evaluating all of the different education programs at the 30 Major League Baseball clubs. Because the international department is so new, Major League Baseball is behind in setting regulations for their education initiatives. Each individual Major League Baseball team determines how much money they spend on their respective facilities. The lack of regulation in place allows each team to determine their own education plan. In the near future Major League Baseball will be enforcing education regulations among all 30 academies. But until then, the education department in the international office will continue evaluating the different programs already in place.

The investigation branch of the international office works to ensure that Dominican players are indeed who they claim to be. Internationally players can sign with a professional team at one of the academies at the age of 16. Many boys will try to obtain documents stating they are younger than they actually are; this gives them an extra year
or two to develop as a player before they sign with a team. With this extra time to
develop, there is a chance for players to sign for a larger signing bonus.

Players must register with the international office in order to try out for any of the
professional teams. The investigation department in the international office investigates
each player who registers with their department. They look into school records, birth
certificates, medical records, and any other documents used to verify a player’s age.
Because of the economic status of the country, often times it is difficult to obtain these
documents. The investigation branch of the international office has a very difficult task
in verifying players’ correct personal information.

Santo Domingo Office Mission Statement: The overall mission of Major League
Baseball's central office in the Dominican Republic is to:

- Facilitate and enhance the development of baseball operations in the Dominican
  Republic
- Ensure that Major League Baseball Clubs are in compliance with laws and
  mandates of the Dominican Republic and the rules of Major League Baseball
- Effect change through sustainable projects that help to improve surrounding
  communities (Meet the Santo Domingo Office, n.d.)

The Santo Domingo international office has several projects in place in the country to
develop baseball operations and improve the surrounding communities. One of the
projects we discussed while at the office was Dominican Republic RBI, Reviving
Baseball in Inner Cities. This program is an initiative to provide young people from
underserved and diverse communities with the opportunity to play baseball and softball,
encourage academic success, and teach the value of teamwork and other important life lessons.

While visiting the international office in Santo Domingo, we learned a lot about the baseball industry and Major League Baseball’s presence in the country. But the biggest takeaway I had after talking with the staff was Major League Baseball’s perception of players in the Dominican Republic. This perception may not have been intentional, but it was definitely apparent. Major League Baseball portrayed young players in the Dominican Republic as young, poor Dominican boys are simply chasing a dream of making it to America, where they will make thousands of dollars and one day they will buy their mother a house. They talked about teaching players finance skills to help them avoid spending money on lavish things and “buying their mother a house.” I agree that these lessons are important; but the perception the international office had of these poor Dominican players was disheartening.

Environmental & Economic Conditions

Water. The water in the Dominican Republic was not clean enough to drink. In my apartment, we had two water jugs that held clean drinking water. These jugs were filled up once every few days, or more frequently depending on how much water we used. There was a water service that would bring two new, full water jugs when my doña called and asked for more water.

While we were at the little leagues, water was scarce. We all had to take our own water bottles to make sure we had something to drink. The boys were able to purchase plastic baggies of water for $0.25RD, or $0.05USD. When comparing this particular
aspect of the Dominican Republic to that of the United States, it was difficult for myself
to see how these people accepted this as normal. I was accustomed to drinking water
right out of the sink; waiting for water jugs was definitely an adjustment.

**Housing.** The poverty in the country was something I had never seen before. We
experienced electricity blackouts often. I did not have air conditioning in my apartment.
It was very uncommon to own a car. Outside of the city, it was common for large
families to live in shacks with dirt floors and no furniture. Many of the boys we were
playing with couldn’t afford basic necessities such as three meals a day, let alone
equipment to play baseball.

During my time in the Dominican Republic, I was fortunate enough to live with a
host family in Gazcue, Santo Domingo. Through this experience I was immersed in the
culture of the Dominican Republic. My host family included my doña (Spanish word for
host mother) Sonia, and my host sister Paola. I was given my own room which included
a double bed, a closet, a dresser and desk, and even a television. My apartment had
electricity and internet access, although we experienced black outs often.

I was fortunate enough to live in an apartment with electricity and clean water to
bathe with; this is not the norm for most of the country. My host family was what many
would consider upper middle class. In the states, this would be comparable to low class.

**Dirt Fields.** Both Rudy and Daniel’s fields were simply dirt lots. They had
plastic, removable bases; there wasn’t any grass on the field to differentiate between the
infield and the outfield. The dirt fields were covered in pebbles, with trash covering the
edges of the fields. Dominicans play on dirt fields where your average baseball player
would struggle fielding a ground ball.
While the boys in the little leagues played on dirt fields, there were many children I saw playing in the streets. They would use different landmarks as bases rather than playing on a dirt lot. Sometimes this was because the boys’ parents couldn’t afford to pay for them to play in a little league. Other times they were simply paying for fun with their friends.

**Road conditions.** The drive to both little league fields always took about an hour, give or take, depending on traffic. People in the Dominican Republic do not obey traffic laws. On most days we would use the taxi service provided by our study abroad program to travel to and from our internships. On the weekends and at night we would call a taxi. To call a taxi to take you anywhere in the city would cost $200RD, or about $4USD.

In the city there were paved roads and highways comparable to those in the United States. Once you left the city, the road conditions changed drastically. Potholes filled dirt roads in areas outside of the city. Many people would walk these dirt roads because they could not afford a vehicle.

**Economy.** The country as a whole has a very low economy; I was able to experience this firsthand while living on the island. Living conditions in the country were a direct correlation of the economy. Sometimes basic necessities such as three meals a day were not available to many people in the country. Some of the people I encountered did not own shoes; others wore ripped shirts and pants that did not fit. In the city there weren’t as many people who struggled financially. But when traveling to Manoguayabo for our internship, we experienced extreme poverty.
Everything on the island was cheap by America’s standards. I could buy an entire mango, sliced and ready to eat, for $0.10 USD. Your average lunch, a salad, beans, rice, and chicken only cost $5.00 USD. We were able to catch a taxi anywhere in the city for $200 RD, or $4.00 USD; splitting this cost between multiple people made it even cheaper. The economic status of the Dominican Republic is low in comparison to the United States; but when comparing this country to their neighboring country, Haiti, the Dominican Republic is much more financially stable. Experiencing the low standard of living firsthand was eye-opening; it made me realize why so many people in the Dominican Republic view baseball as a way out.

**Education**

When we talk about young Dominican players signing with an academy, it sounds like some sort of school and this is simply not the case. Players sign with one of the 30 Major League Baseball professional teams and join their academy on the island. They then participate in the Dominican Summer League, a league on the island where all 30 teams play against each other over the course of 4 months during the summer. These are actual games played at the different academies. These academies provide players with a roof over their heads, food on the table, and baseball training.

As stated earlier, the lack of regulations from Major League Baseball for the academies in the country has led to a wide variety of programs available. Every Major League Baseball academy treats education differently. Some academies only offer English courses while others provide the opportunity for players to take courses in an attempt to complete high school.
In the Dominican Republic, baseball is the priority and education is placed on the backburner for many children. If at 12 or 13 years old a buscón offers you the opportunity to come train with him, in an attempt to make it to one of the academies, the answer is easy. Many boys drop out of school around this age to pursue a career in baseball. Major League Baseball claims they do not encourage this type of behavior but in reality, this is not the case. When a professional team expects a player to perform on a professional level at the age of 16, the only option these players have is to pursue their dream and train fulltime. While Major League Baseball may not directly encourage this behavior, unfortunately this is the reality in the Dominican Republic today.

**Athletic Imperialism**

During our visit to the Major League Baseball International offices, I was somewhat surprised by the narrative they were painting. Those working at the international office painted a picture, one that we had discussed in our class discussions every day. The narrative they painted was this: young, poor Dominican boys are simply chasing a dream of making it to America, where they will make thousands of dollars and one day they will buy their mother a house. The people working at the International office made it seem like they were doing everything in their power to help these young boys.

This narrative, told all across the island, was a difficult one to swallow, especially after spending so much time with those “young, poor Dominican boys.” Major League Baseball portrays the sport as a way out, a way to a better life. But when working with these boys, I was pleasantly surprised by their attitudes. While their driving force may
have been a shot at the major leagues, it definitely did not show most of the time. When I was on the field with them, they were simply having fun; these boys were playing a sport they loved with their friends.

There are four guiding principles in the Dominican Republic: God, Country, Liberty, and Baseball. This was the biggest realization for me. I finally realized that baseball is so much more than just a sport in the Dominican. Baseball is a way of life. The passion for baseball in the Dominican Republic is something I struggle to describe because the people live it.

When looking at a player from the United States and comparing him to a player from the Dominican Republic, the differences are drastic. The road to the majors in the United States looks much different than it does in the Dominican Republic. As Americans, often times we dismiss what these foreign players endured during the road to the USA. Originally I viewed baseball in the Dominican Republic as a way out of a broken economic system. This is indeed true, but it’s so much more than that.

We must not forget the adjustment these players face once they make it to the United States. My time in the Dominican Republic made me realize how difficult it must be for these players to adjust to life in the States. Personally, I did not know any Spanish. I had a difficult time doing simple tasks such as ordering lunch or asking where I might be able to find a restroom. I was fortunate enough to live with someone who was fluent in both English and Spanish. But this isn’t always the case for Dominican players in the states.

One of the most memorable lessons from my culture course was comparing two player’s tribune articles. Andrew McCutchen, center fielder for the Pittsburg Pirates,
wrote an article discussing the difficulty players from low income families in the United States face when pursuing a career in baseball. At one point in his article McCutchen (2015) mentioned his jealousy of players in Latin America.

“Fixing that problem is complicated, but when I was a kid, I looked at baseball players growing up in Latin America with a lot of envy. If you’re a talented kid in the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico, a team can come along and say, “We’re going to sign you for $50,000 and take you into our organization and develop you, feed you, take care of your travel.” To me, as a 14-year-old kid whose family was struggling, that would have meant everything to me. I would have taken that deal in a second” (McCutchen, 2015).

Jose Bautista, right fielder for the Toronto Blue Jays, wrote an article in response to McCutchen. Bautista discusses baseball in the Dominican Republic from a different perspective, rather than through the eyes of an American. He explained the process and what those of us in the United States often do not understand. “Have your child give up school at age 12 for a 3 percent chance to play in the Majors. And they do it happily and willingly. Because there is no other choice” (Bautista, 2015). Bautista argues that, while some people view the system as an easier way to the majors, in reality, there is so much more that goes on behind the scenes; his biggest point: education.

“But here’s the difference between you and them: Most of those kids are released back into the world with a sixth grade education — something that is not just
unthinkable but illegal in America. What are they supposed to do, go back to sixth grade at age 20? They don’t have any technical skills. They can’t be an electrician or a mechanic. They’ve spent 10 years of their life being only one thing: a baseball player” (Bautista, 2015).

The comparison of these two articles clearly shows the different perspectives of baseball in the Dominican Republic and baseball in the United States. Until I visited the country and was able to experience the system firsthand, I had a different perception of baseball in the Dominican Republic. One of the biggest comparisons we examined during our time in the Dominican was the question: is baseball Dominican? Are Dominicans able to claim the sport as their own? Or is baseball still America’s pastime?

My favorite quote from the article Bautista wrote was this: “It’s up to us in Major League Baseball to look at those kids as human beings and not just prospects” (Bautista, 2015). During my time on the island, this way the biggest takeaway for me. These players are not simply prospects, they are human beings. Major League Baseball has a moral and social responsibility to take care of these boys not only as players, but as people.

Major League Baseball has inserted itself into the Dominican Republic, changing the way people view baseball as a whole. Major League Baseball views baseball in the Dominican Republic as a way to help the country and provide children an opportunity to escape poverty. Dominicans have taken on the sport of baseball and made it their own; but at the same time, the major leagues are still the end goal in the baseball industry.
CHAPTER 5:
DISCUSSIONS

Baseball in the Dominican Republic has drastically transformed over the years. Some argue that the system in place is benefiting both Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic (Ruck, 2012). But Dependency Theory argues that the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected (Hubbell, 2008). Examining the different aspects of the Dominican Republic discussed in this paper shows that, while both parties may benefit, there is still some underdevelopment occurring.

“The dependent states supply cheap minerals, agricultural commodities, and cheap labor, and also serve as the repositories of surplus capital, obsolescent technologies, and manufactured goods” (Ferraro, 2008). The dependent state in this situation is the Dominican Republic; the cheap labor supplied by the Dominican Republic is human capital, or baseball players. The country is supplying this cheap labor to Major League Baseball, the dominant country in this situation. The question still remains: is this the reason the Dominican Republic is not developing?

The international division of labor can be seen in the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Major League Baseball; many multinational corporations have made the move to countries in which labor and production are much cheaper. The shift of resources coming from Latin American countries provides the organization with cheap labor.
These functions orient the economies of the dependent states toward the outside: money, goods, and services do flow into dependent states, but the allocation of these resources are determined by the economic interests of the dominant states, and not by the economic interests of the dependent state. Major League Baseball is providing an opportunity for Dominicans to work at the academies; these jobs can range from coaches, trainers, and players to English teachers and cooks. But, as the theory states, the allocation of these resources are determined by the economic interests of the dominant states. In this situation, Major League Baseball determines the allocation of the resources in the Dominican Republic.

**Baseball – Dependency Theory**

Individually, it is easy to see the opportunities Major League Baseball is providing to many Dominicans. The success of Dominicans in the United States at the professional level is a constant reminder of the opportunities and possibilities Major League Baseball brings to the table. For those players who do not make it to the states, but simply remain in an academy for a few years, make more money in those few years than they would in ten years on the streets. This American baseball dream remains at the forefront of the culture for many individuals facing extreme poverty. Baseball is easily accessible; the only thing you need to play the sport is a stick and something to hit. Because so many people on the island are able to refer to someone they know who made it to an academy, it is difficult for many Dominicans to see how many job opportunities actually exist in the baseball industry.
The structure of baseball in the Dominican Republic has been formed by the dominant state, Major League Baseball. Major League Baseball has had external influences on the baseball system; it has influenced the country politically, economically, and culturally on the national development of baseball. Dependent states supply cheap labor to dominant states; the academy system in the Dominican Republic is doing just that. However, Dominicans make up a large part of the baseball system in the country. While Major League Baseball has indeed entered the country and developed the system, they still rely heavily on Dominicans to produce star athletes.

It is through the little league and buscónes systems in which baseball players are produced. Major League Baseball must rely on these little league coaches to encourage players to continue playing baseball. It is through these little leagues that players learn the game of baseball. The academies rely on buscónes as their first tier of recruiting. Without these men, along with the little league coaches across the country, there would not be a baseball industry on the island like there is today.

In the academy systems, Major League Baseball also relies on Dominicans; it is easier, and cheaper, to hire Dominicans to work in the kitchen or as a groundskeeper at the academy than it is to pay someone from the United States to do the same job. One can argue that Major League Baseball is providing opportunities for Dominicans to work in the academy systems. But, as the theory states, the allocation of these resources are determined by the economic interests of the dominant states. In this situation, Major League Baseball determines the allocation of the resources in the Dominican Republic; these resources being economic gain from the academies. Through their control, Major League Baseball, more specifically the individual teams, have the power to determine
what opportunities are available in the academies. They also have the power to determine how much money runs through their system.

Major League Baseball’s International office is another component of the baseball system in the Dominican Republic. In Dependency Theory, economic political power is heavily concentrated and centralized; governments will take whatever steps necessary to protect private economic interests. Through implementing the international office in Santo Domingo, Major League Baseball is able to control the different aspects of the system, protecting their economic interests.

The international division of labor can be seen here; many multinational corporations have made the move to countries in which labor and production are much cheaper. This holds true with Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic. The shift to the Latin American country provides the organization with cheap labor. The cheap labor in this situation is baseball players. Major League Baseball is able to sign players at a significantly lower price than that of an American baseball player. This allows the organization to control the system, therefore, hindering the baseball industry from developing in the Dominican Republic. Without Major League Baseball’s presence on the island, one would assume the country would continue to develop their own baseball industry, continuing to produce baseball players who are able to compete at the professional level.

**Environment/Economy – Dependency Theory**

The economy of the country does not provide Dominicans with many stable options. With a large majority of the country so heavily focused on baseball, it is
difficult for the country to pull ahead in regard to their position in the world economy. The international division of labor has had a major impact on the relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic. This situation is comparable to that of other United States corporations outsourcing labor to other countries where the service is much cheaper. You could also compare this relationship to the extraction of oil. The United States has a track record of drilling for oil elsewhere and purchasing it from third world countries for much cheaper, leaving behind a broken economic system that is suffering.

With a broken economic system, it is difficult for the country to pour money into things such as living conditions or environmental issues. The overall economic status of the country prevents any development towards increasing the standard of living. Individuals’ efforts are placed on growing and developing on the baseball field rather than developing the country. Sports opportunities are often not the answer to societal problems. In this case, the opportunity to play baseball at the major league level in the United States does not solve the economic and environmental issues at hand.

It can be argued that Dominicans do not have other options besides baseball. This has caused many Dominicans to pursue a career in baseball. From an economic standpoint, the country does not offer Dominicans many options to escape the broken economic system. Therefore, the opportunity to play for a Dominican academy breaks this system and gives individuals the opportunity to capitalize based on their athletic abilities.

Baseball at the highest level is Major League Baseball in the United States. There are no opportunities for individuals to play at this same level in their home country.
Because of this, Dominicans work their way through the system that is in place and hope to succeed at the professional level. Structurally, the system does not allow for these baseball players to improve the economy in their home country. Major League Baseball controls the amount of money that flows into the country. With this control, they can determine the amount of economic gain, if any, for the Dominican Republic.

In regard to the Dominican Republic and their presence in the international economy, their status remains low. Besides the United States, the Dominican Republic is producing the most number of professional baseball players in the major leagues. If these players were given the opportunity to play at this level in their home country, the Dominican Republic would reap the financial benefits of baseball. The system that is in place today extracts talented baseball players and provides them with economic gain. But the country that is benefiting from this economic gain is the United States, not the Dominican Republic. When examining baseball in relation to this topic, one might conclude that baseball is hindering any opportunity to develop. The lack of economic gain in the country does not allow the Dominican Republic to capitalize on professional Dominican players and their successes.

**Education – Dependency Theory**

The biggest problem I found in the Dominican Republic was the lack of education. While Major League Baseball is not directly encouraging boys to drop out of school, this is the reality. Young boys pursuing a career in baseball often drop out of school at 14 or 15 years old, sometimes sooner. If a player does not sign with an academy, he is left with a low level of education to fall back on. This is causing many
Dominican boys to resort to life on the streets, sometimes involving crime. Continued education would provide these individuals with the necessary skills to obtain a job if a career in baseball did not work.

The lack of educational opportunities in the academies are causing a drop off in overall education among boys in the Dominican Republic. Education in the academies would benefit not only the individual players, but the country as a whole. Many players who do not make it in the academy system, or who are cut from a team, return to the broken economic system with a 5th grade education to fall back on. Some pursue a lifestyle involving crime and delinquencies. If these players were given the opportunity to further their education past the 5th or 6th grade level, there is a possibility that they may pursue careers in other fields in an attempt to support themselves and their families.

The lack of education initiatives in the baseball academies is a direct effect of Major League Baseball and their presence on the island. Major League Baseball’s International office is starting to look at education initiatives; this shows promise for the academy systems on the island. But based on the lack of education currently provided to these players, and others who also dropped out of school to pursue a career in baseball, the Dominican Republic will continue to struggle when attempting to develop and grow.

This lack of education within the baseball system is hindering individuals from growing and, in turn, helping develop the country as a whole. While Dependency Theory looks at the economy of a certain group of countries conditioned by the development and expansions of another economy, this particular section is looking at education. The education within the academy system has been conditioned by the development and expansions of Major League Baseball.
Many Dominicans feel that if the country, as a whole, were able to push education as much as they push baseball, the opportunities would be endless. The Dominican Republic would flourish if people would take the drive and initiative they have for baseball and apply it to work or education. Educational opportunities exist on the island; it is simply a matter of pushing these opportunities more than baseball.

**Athletic Imperialism – Dependency Theory**

Cultural Imperialism is the imposition of a foreign viewpoint or civilization on a people. In this situation, athletic imperialism is in play. Imperialism and dependency are two very different concepts; imperialism explains dominant state expansion while the dependency theory explains underdevelopment. But through my research, I saw that the perception of baseball in the Dominican Republic has been heavily influenced by Major League Baseball’s presence. The topic at hand remains the same: underdevelopment. But it is through this “athletic imperialism” that has shifted the needle and caused this underdevelopment.

The shift in the perception of baseball in the Dominican Republic can be credited to Major League Baseball; their presence on the island has taken what used to be a sport and manipulated it into a business. This manipulation has changed many things on the island. In some instances, baseball is no longer viewed as recreational. The sport is an opportunity to make it out; cheating the system by forging documents or using performance enhancing drugs has become a way to “make it” in the business of baseball in the Dominican Republic. There are so many moving pieces and parts in the industry
that one can no longer say baseball is a sport. In the words of Rob Ruck (2012),
“Baseball has never been stronger as a business, never weaker as a game.”

The misperception of baseball in the Dominican Republic has affected individuals. The dream is to make it to the major leagues. Individuals are making changes in order to pursue careers in baseball. Education is placed on the backburner and baseball is the main focus. At the individual level, baseball is viewed as the way out. Major League Baseball has portrayed the sport as a saving grace to the country; the organization prides itself with its presence on the island. Young, poor Dominican boys now have the opportunity to play for a professional team. They are given a roof over their heads, three meals a day, and are kept safe for a period of time. These players are also given a signing bonus, more than most would earn in a decade. This opportunity Major League Baseball has provided to the island is just that: an opportunity. Every young boy on the island is not given the chance to play at the professional level. Every person on the island does not benefit from Major League Baseball’s presence. The system in place allows for a small percentage of Dominicans to reap the benefits on professional baseball. The country as a whole is suffering.

The dependency theory states that external forces are of singular importance to the economic activities within the dependent states (Ferraro, 2008). In this relationship, the external force is Major League Baseball. Ferraro (2008) also states the relations between dominant and dependent states are dynamic because the interactions between the two sets of states tend to not only reinforce, but also intensify the unequal patterns. The consistent interactions between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic,
through the exchanging of resources (baseball players), is hindering any chance of development in the country in regard to the baseball industry.

In regard to the central propositions of Dependency Theory (Ferraro, 2008), underdevelopment is most certainly at play. Resources, or in this case human capital, are being used, but used in a way which benefits the dominant state, Major League Baseball, and not the poorer state, the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic is poor because the country was integrated into the baseball system only as a producer of raw materials, or baseball players, and have been denied the opportunity to market their resources in a way to compete with the dominant state. The Dominican Republic continually produces star athletes who go on to compete in Major League Baseball; these players are not given the opportunity to compete in their home country at the same level and professional baseball in the United States.

“Dependency theory suggests that alternative uses of resources are preferable to the resource usage patterns imposed by dominant states” (Ferraro, 2008). In this situation, the use of professional Dominican baseball players could be used to benefit the Dominican Republic rather than Major League Baseball. The opportunity for a professional league in the country would be an alternative use for these resources. Dependency theorists also believe “there exists a clear “national” economic interest which can and should be articulated for each country…this interest can only be satisfied by addressing the needs of the poor within a society, rather than through the satisfaction of corporate or governmental needs” (Ferraro, 2008). The economic interest of the Dominican Republic cannot be satisfied until Major League Baseball’s needs are either ignored or redirected.
“The diversion of resources over time…is maintained not only by the power of dominant states, but also through the power of elites in the dependent states” (Ferraro, 2008). This diversion of resources, human capital, is controlled by Major League Baseball. This statement argues that, while the organization as a whole has power, it is through the elite within the organization who ultimately make decisions. One could argue that the elite of Major League Baseball is the organization itself. Based on my observations, I would argue that the international office is one group of “elite” who have power over the dependent states.

Using Dependency theory as a lens to examine this relationship allows a macroeconomic theory to explain a micro situation. Major League Baseball is the dominant state; the Dominican Republic is the dependent state. The resources being exchanged between the two are human capital, or baseball players. Major League Baseball controls the allocation of these resources and determines the economic impact these resources have on the dependent country. The Dominican Republic will continue to remain underdeveloped if Major League Baseball’s presence persists on the island. Without their control, the Dominican Republic may have the opportunity to capitalize using their own resources, baseball players.
CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSIONS

Internationally, the Dominican Republic is seen as a gold mine in terms of talented baseball players. But it is difficult to examine the system in the country with an unbiased view. Americans can easily look at the situation from an ethnocentric viewpoint and see that Major League Baseball has taken advantage of the island. Journalistic coverage of baseball in the Dominican Republic has painted the picture that there is corruption and mistreatment on the island. While this may have been true in the past, I did not witness this firsthand. In my opinion, the global perception of baseball in the Dominican Republic cannot be based on an ethnocentric view. I do agree that Major League Baseball has taken advantage of a poor country in an attempt to capitalize on cheap resources. But this is not the only thing happening on the island in regard to baseball.

Many Dominicans work in the baseball system; without their help, Major League Baseball would struggle to find as much talent as they have in the past. Dominicans are the people developing these players. On an international level, the Dominican Republic stands out because of the huge numbers of players produced at the professional level each year.

But when examining the Dominican Republic’s status internationally, it is easy to argue that Major League Baseball’s presence is hindering the country from developing or moving up in the global economy. It is difficult to ignore the perception of baseball at the international level; the sport is rapidly growing around the world. This point is most
apparent in the Dominican Republic. But the opportunities for baseball in the country are not allowing the country to develop on an international level.

In regard to baseball in the Dominican Republic, there are many ways one might evaluate the relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic. While I used the Dependency Theory as a lens, others have used the Global Commodity Chain as well as Colonialism. It is simply a matter of opinion as to which explanation works best. In my opinion, the Dependency Theory is a good lens to examine the relationship, but I am lacking some support.

Because this study was conducted via an ethnography, further research examining specific numbers would benefit this study. Statistics concerning the number of Dominican players who make it to the states would be helpful, as well as any political involvement in the system. Because I conducted an ethnography, I did not look into any public records concerning political involvement. But I believe research concerning this topic would be very beneficial to this examination of baseball in the Dominican, especially when using Dependency Theory as a lens.

In a system where there are so many moving pieces and parts, I am sure some political or governmental involvement is occurring. Research to support this claim would be beneficial in arguing the relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic. While I was not able to gain access to public records, future researchers might find it beneficial to examine this resource.

Through examining the situation in the Dominican Republic using my own observations, I easily missed very important information that pertains to this topic. Interviews, as well as quantitative research are key in supporting a topic as complex as
this one. But basing my study on simply my own observations allowed me to see genuine responses of those living in the Dominican Republic.

This study is strictly based on personal observations during a short six-week time frame. This study is limited because of the short time frame as well as the language barrier I faced. A longer time frame on site would be beneficial, allowing for more observations and the opportunity to visit more places in the country. More time would have allowed me to visit more academies on the island, as well as visit other cities and examine little league baseball camps outside of Santo Domingo.

This methodology is appropriate as this study evaluates an extremely unique case that will critically test existing frameworks regarding this relationship. By conducting an ethnography, I was able to observe without being observed. This type of research allowed me to be “a fly on the wall,” conducting research without my subjects being aware of my study.

The use of a macroeconomic theory to examine a micro non-economic situation is what some would call risky. Dependency theory has been widely rejected in recent years. But applying a theory such as this to a micro situation is one way to prove that the theory is still relevant on a global scale.

For future researchers, one might look more in depth at the international office in Santo Domingo. Initiatives in the country are constantly improving; education programs are being implemented; Spanish translators will soon be required for Major League Baseball teams in the United States. Major League Baseball is working to right some of their wrongs. An in depth examination of this international office would give a better idea of what it is Major League Baseball is doing in the country.
An in depth evaluation of political or governmental involvement with Major League Baseball should also be considered when researching this topic further. The government in the Dominican Republic must have some form of agreement with Major League Baseball to allow their presence in the country. Research surrounding this agreement would provide better insight as to what the relationship actually looks like.
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During my time in the Dominican Republic, I was enrolled in two college courses: Ethical Issues in Sport Development and Cultural Studies of Caribbean Sport. Through these courses, I was able to learn and reflect on everything the island had to offer in regard to baseball. Through site visits, as well as readings and documentaries, I learned more about baseball in the Dominican Republic than I thought possible. During my time on the island I wrote reflective pieces about the different site visits, as well as several essays applying what I learned to the readings provided in class. I have compiled my responses below:

Six weeks have come and gone but the experiences I have had will last a lifetime. As cliché as that sounds, it’s true. I have met some incredible people during this journey; I have grown as a person. I have overcome the fear of living in a foreign country and I am a different person because of it. Every cliché you could think of that is related to travel is applicable to my experience during the past month and a half. Before arriving in the Dominican Republic, I thought I knew how baseball worked. I was under the impression that Dominican buscónes were the “bad guys.” I thought Dominican players were receiving education. I thought the system was solely dependent on Major League Baseball. I thought I knew what to expect. In a few short days, I realized I had been mistaken.

Through my internship at the little leagues this summer, I was able to examine the baseball system through the eyes of children. Instead of worrying about the business side
of baseball, I was able to experience the passion. I was able to look at baseball in the Dominican Republic at a local level. Working with Daniel Portorreal and Rudy Ramirez taught me that baseball is so much more than Major League Baseball. Major League Baseball represents the business side of the baseball industry; the kids I worked with for six weeks represent who actually makes up baseball. These two little leagues are a part of the bigger local community of baseball in the Dominican Republic. Through my courses, I have learned that this local community plays a special role in a much bigger picture: baseball on a global scale.

In his book Dominican Baseball: New Pride, Old Prejudice, Alan Klein looks at Dominican baseball using the concept of a global-local confluence. “…grasping the Dominican game through its links to Major League Baseball enables us to gain a sense of what a dynamic and seamless transnational system it has become.” Dominican baseball plays a huge role in Major League Baseball today. There are hundreds of Dominican players in the system ranging between the academy systems in the Dominican Republic all the way to the Major Leagues. While looking at baseball through the eyes of Major League Baseball will allow us to examine the relationship at the global level, we cannot forget about the local levels as well.

Dominicans have a sense of ownership over the game of baseball in the Dominican Republic. People like Daniel and Rudy are involved in the system through their little leagues. Other Dominicans act as buscónes and train players at a more advanced level. There are Dominicans who run their own private academies and house players during their training. Dominicans have their own system for baseball that is completely separate from Major League Baseball. While the main end goal might be to
make it to the major leagues, Dominicans enjoy the game of baseball at the local level first.

Through our site visits and reflections during the last six weeks we were able to examine the baseball system in the Dominican Republic.
SITE VISITS

Houston Astros Academy

The Houston Astros welcomed us to their facility with open arms today. For those of you who are not familiar with Dominican Baseball and the system, here is a brief overview:

There are several Little League camps/training academies here in the Dominican Republic (DR). Some of these camps are run by buscónes – men in the DR who bring young boys into their camp and train them in hopes that one of the MLB teams will sign them. There is a negative connotation that goes along with buscónes; most of them are only worried about their pay out, not necessarily the boys or their wellbeing. Then there are camps run by people like Daniel Portorreal, whom I wrote about yesterday. He is actually invested in the young boys’ lives; he cares about them and wants to see them succeed.

While touring the facilities at the Houston Astros, I was amazed at the MLB teams and their lack of empathy. Many of the players they sign will not make it to the United States. And when signing boys from the Little League camps, they must pick and choose, knowing those who are not chosen have nothing to fall back on. These players usually drop out of school and pursue a career in baseball with hopes that they will one day make it to the Major Leagues. The reality is quite the opposite.

I was blown away at the fact that MLB teams are so willing to invest so much money into facilities in the DR, and yet are not concerned about the wellbeing of the boys after their
time at the academy ends. I am well aware of the business side of baseball, especially in the DR. But the human side of me throws a red flag and makes me wonder how people in this business are able to turn their heads and ignore the many boys who are dumped back into the system, an unstable economy without any education.

The idea of educating these boys is a great idea; but simply put, it is just an idea. How much can these young men learn in the short period of time they are at these academies? Many of the boys at the baseball academies have dropped out of school to pursue a career in baseball. How then would someone be able to motivate the players to learn anything, let alone a foreign language in preparation for their time in the USA? While I do feel that the academies have good intentions, there are still many issues that come along with them.

Consuelo

During our trip to Consuelo, I was surprised to hear about their education programs. It amazed me to learn that the young man we spoke with had only been studying English for 6 months; his English was very good! The importance of education in this small town is amazing and the number of scholarships is remarkable.

It was also very interesting to see the sugar mills. The two men who gave us the tour actually worked in the mills when they were younger. Sometimes I forget what other people have to go through to earn a living. Seeing the sugar mill and hearing all of the details about how the mill was run reminded me of the amount of work it required. But when the mill was shut down, the town suffered. It’s amazing how something like a sugar mill can do so much for a community.
We were also able to meet Manny Acta’s parents. They invited us into their home with open arms. I was impressed with how many baseball players have come from Consuelo. Manny Acta’s contribution to the community, four baseball fields, was heartwarming.

Through our site visits to the Houston Astros Academy and the town of Consuelo, we were given a basis of how baseball in communities and the academy systems work in the Dominican Republic. We were able to speak with the English teacher from the Houston Astros as well as the principal at a school in Consuelo. Through these visits, we were able to compare the education systems in the academies to that of Consuelo, a town that highly values education.

MLB Offices

After visiting the MLB Offices in Santo Domingo, my mind was racing in regard to the MLB’s presence here in the Dominican Republic. I was under the impression that the people who spoke to us about the MLB viewed the organization as “the best thing to ever happen to the DR.” I just do not think this is true. Don’t get me wrong – I think the MLB has a lot of potential here in the Dominican Republic. But as of right now, I think their efforts are failing. The idea of the academy system has positive and negative aspects to it. I believe one of the major flaws of the system is education.

One may argue that the MLB cannot regulate education in a foreign country. I would argue the opposite. The MLB has already made its presence known in this country; who’s to say they cannot step in and implement some regulations in regard to the education system in the academies? I do not believe it should be up to the individual
teams to implement any sort of education program at their academy. I do, however, believe that the MLB should require some basic level of education for each of the players who have signed with a professional team.

The argument that the MLB/each team should not have to invest that much money into a system for education is ridiculous. If the MLB wants to extract “raw materials” for a low cost, the least they could do is provide these players with an education they can fall back on in the event they do not make it all the way to the majors.

**Daniel y Indio**

So far, I have thoroughly enjoyed our time with Daniel Portorreal. But after hearing his story today, I respect him so much more not only as a coach, but as a person as well. I really enjoyed speaking with Daniel and Leonicio this morning. So far we have examined many success stories; we have even looked at the idea of players not making it to the academies. But today we were given an inside look at what happens after you “make it.”

When learning that Daniel had the experience to easily work for an MLB academy in the Dominican Republic, I was even more impressed with his choice to run his little league. In my opinion, it takes a special kind of person to turn down a job such as a pitching coach for an MLB team and a fixed salary for a job that doesn’t pay well in the slightest and has little security. The little league’s focus on education is also very encouraging.

Both Daniel and Leonicio spoke very highly of their time playing baseball. It was easy to recognize the passion both of these men have for the sport. While Leonicio’s and
Daniel’s stories differ, their passion for the game resonate through them both. Through their stories, we were able to see the flip side of Dominican baseball – what happens when you don’t make it? Their stories gave a counter to the narrative the MLB tells. Working with Daniel and his players is a great illustration of the idea of baseball in the Dominican Republic and its true meaning – Dominican baseball.

Daniel and El Indio unfortunately did not make it to the Major Leagues. But does this mean baseball is over for them? Of course not! Baseball lives within Dominicans on this island. From Daniel and Rudy’s little leagues to the town of Consuelo and the Manny Acta Sport and Educational Complex, baseball is a permanent piece of the culture here in the Dominican Republic.

**Mets Academy**

After learning much more about the pipeline and the academy system, we were able to visit the New York Mets Academy. This site visit gave us a chance to compare our experiences at the Astros academy and see the differences between the two individual teams’ systems. We compared facilities as well as the educational structure.

The New York Mets are definitely doing something right; that something is their baseball academy in the Dominican Republic. The Mets academy is by far the nicest academy we have seen. The facilities were very modern and the grounds were kept clean. The landscaping was amazing. I was impressed with the amount of space the complex had for the players and staff.

The most impressive aspect of the Mets academy was by far their education system. After speaking with one of the English teachers, we learned that the Mets
players are divided into four levels depending on their ability to speak and understand English. Players from the Dominican Republic are also given the opportunity to finish their high school diploma during their time at the academy.

The Mets seem to be doing a lot of things well in regard to education. Their partnership with a university in the United States is a great way to give students from the US an opportunity to work aboard and it gives the students a great resource to learn English. Overall, the New York Mets are doing very well. Their facilities are above par and their education system is definitely in the right direction. Visiting the Mets academy gave me hope that some of these players are not coming to the states without any sort of education.

**Rudy Ramirez Little League**

During our visit to Rudy Ramirez’s Little League, I was very impressed with the view on education. My first opinion of Dominican baseball in relation to education was a negative one. I was under the impression that the majority of young boys playing baseball in the Dominican Republic were no longer in school. To hear that Rudy and a few of the other coaches required their players to bring them a copy of their grades was shocking. I was impressed with the fact that these coaches made the boys who failed a course attend summer school until they were able to pass that course.

Meeting the two boys from the states was a neat experience as well. I was not aware of the fact that boys from the United States come to the Dominican Republic seeking a better opportunity for a shot at the big leagues. We did meet one boy at the Astros Academy who was from Mexico, but who had lived in the US, who came to the
Dominican Republic to play. I was interested in their background and their reasoning for coming so far for a chance to make it. I would be interested to know just how many boys come to the Dominican Republic looking for a chance to be signed by a professional team.

**Lidom**

Touring Lidom was an exciting experience. It was easy to see the pride that comes along with the Dominican Winter League. The Dominican Winter League includes several countries in the Caribbean.

One of the more interesting things that stood out to me yesterday was the occupation of all the presidents of the teams. All of the presidents were lawyers; they were also predominately lighter skinned. These two facts play into the race issue in the Dominican Republic. Some may argue these men are in the role of power because of their occupation. But where is the correlation between color and occupation? Are there attorneys of darker color?

The issue of race in the Dominican Republic applies to many situations, not only occupation. But to see this issue arise in the baseball industry was interesting to me. I wasn’t anticipating all of the presidents being attorneys either. This makes the idea of money must more prevalent in the Dominican Republic – in order to make it to the top, you must have money to back your way up.
MOVIE RESPONSES

Pelotero

Over the last few weeks we have examined the narrative the MLB is painting: poor, uneducated Dominican boys’ only hope is to sign a major league contract to buy a house for their mothers and the MLB is doing great things to help these poor unfortunate souls. The documentary Pelotero showed a different side to the narrative.

The documentary highlighted two stories of Miguel Angel Sanó and Jean Carlos Batista’s journeys to signing a professional baseball contract here in the Dominican Republic. The documentary highlights the process all players must go through with the MLB in order sign a professional contract come July 2nd. Upon first watching this film, I was under the impression many players in the Dominican Republic changed their age and identity in order to sign at an older age for more money. After a few weeks here in the Dominican Republic, I realized there is much more to this story than what meets the eye.

The MLB is a business; they handle issues from the perspective of a business. One could argue that this film failed to show the readers the business side of the situation. This film portrayed the MLB as doing “dirty business” by dragging out the investigations of the two young players. While we do not know all of the information, the MLB still had to do its job in investigating the young boys. Maybe it was the fault of the players; maybe it was the fault of the MLB. Either way, the investigation process is a necessity in the Dominican Republic.

One of the main points that stuck out to me in the film was Rene Gayo’s comment about the families “getting confused” about the process. This depiction puts the fault on the
families of the players rather than the MLB. In my opinion, I feel that the MLB could handle this situation differently. While the families very well may have been confused, the MLB must acknowledge the confusion the investigation process can bring. I don’t think it would be difficult for the MLB to someone implement a way to make sure every involved, players, scouts, agents, families, etc., understood the process to ensure there was no confusion.

The argument of the MLB being a business is important. But through the last few weeks, my opinion on this topic has changed. I completely understand that the MLB does much of what they do because they are a business; but there comes a point in every business or corporation where you must acknowledge your social responsibility. What makes this situation different is the use of human capital versus regular assets. When dealing with human capital, especially at the ages of 16-21, the MLB should acknowledge the social responsibility they have to the players. Any industry using people as assets should be held to a higher standard, in my opinion. This film highlighted two instances where the MLB may have been in the wrong.

The system here in the Dominican Republic is very far from perfect. There are pros and cons on both sides. The people of the Dominican Republic and the MLB both need to recognize their faults in the system. It’s going to take a lot to make any changes in the way baseball is governed in the Dominican Republic.

**Rumbo a Las Grandes Ligas**

Overall, I felt as if the documentary Rumbo a las Grandes Ligas/Road to the Big Leagues was just another form of the narrative already being told here in the Dominican
Republic. In the short amount of time we have been here, we have seen this narrative repeated in several different contexts.

The narrative I am referring to is that of the MLB – they are doing great things in the Dominican Republic. The players who are signed with the MLB all come from very poor families in the Dominican Republic. Once the players are signed, they spend their money poorly. The players are uneducated about finances; therefore, they spend their money on luxury items instead of saving it. Some of the players also spend their signing bonuses on “a new house for my mother.”

While parts of this narrative may be true, the Dominican Republic and the MLB, as two separate entities, are missing the big picture. This system involves a deep level of exploitation; whether or not the MLB will do anything to change this narrative is the main question.

This documentary outlined many of the problems in the system – lack of education in the system and players slipping through the cracks. Through everything I have learned so far, I am still baffled by the MLB and their lack of empathy. I do understand that this is a business and money is the center of the entire operation. But corporations have social responsibilities to the community.

The narrative the MLB is attempting to paint sets them at the top, above all of the players coming from not only the Dominican Republic, but all of Latin America. I do believe the MLB has good ideas; I just wish they would be willing to admit there is a major problem with the system and take the time to address it.
**Sugar**

The film “Sugar” was a phenomenal depiction of life for a Dominican baseball player in the United States. Before this program, I had never taken the time to think about how life would be for a foreign player in the states. This film gives an inside look at how difficult it can be for a young boy to move away from his family and attempt to live a normal life in a new world.

One of the main points that stood out to me from the film was the way Sugar’s host family was illustrated. The language barrier provided a very difficult issue when communicating. Personally, I have experienced this difficulty while staying here in the Dominican Republic. I feel that the language barrier is definitely an issue, but the way it was illustrated in the film gave the impression of ignorance among whites in the United States. This idea is probably not too far-fetched. The ethnocentric view many people from the United States have was illustrated through Sugar’s host family and their lack of knowledge of Dominican culture.

Another aspect that stood out to me was the closing scene at the end of the movie. After Sugar left his team and traveled to New York, he found his friend and was able to play baseball with a league of former players. I found the closing scene of all the different players stating their former teams very powerful. This illustrated the number of players who didn’t make it all the way. While some of these players did indeed play in the major leagues, this scene illustrated the face that there is life after the major leagues. Baseball cannot be your main focus because one day it will be over.
ESSAYS

Essay 1

The town of Consuelo, specifically, has contributed to this idea of a Global-Local confluence. This small town has sent more baseball players to the Major Leagues than anywhere else in the Dominican Republic. By feeding into the system of the MLB extracting the talent from the Dominican, Consuelo plays a major part in the Global-Local confluence. The sport has a presence worldwide; but the local presence of baseball in the Dominican Republic is nothing like baseball anywhere else.

Another aspect of Consuelo in relation to the idea of a Global-Local confluence is the sugar mill. Originally, the sugar mills provided between 3,000 and 5,000 jobs. After its closure, the community suffered from a lack of jobs. The connection between this and baseball in the Dominican Republic is apparent; because of the lack of jobs, most people turn to baseball as an escape from a poverty-filled community. Baseball served as a way out for many Dominicans; but the sad reality is the number of boys who don’t make it to the major leagues and end up back in a broken economic system.

The academy system has good and bad aspects. The original idea of the academy system is good in theory; teams can provide young boys a place to stay with three meals a day while they train for the majors. The academies are a way to get these boys off of the street and give them a chance at a better life. But when a small percentage of them actually make it to the big league, that’s when a problem occurs. Young boys are left
without jobs because their main focus was baseball. A lack of education, due to focusing on baseball, leaves these boys nothing to fall back on later in life.

The lack of education in the academy systems fails the players in the long run. Many of the players who don’t make it to the big leagues must reenter society. The struggle then becomes finding a job without an education. The idea of teaching these boys English is good if they are make it to the United States. But for those who don’t, learning English may not benefit them as much.

For the players who do make it to the Major Leagues and travel to the United States to play, the amount of education they have will also impact their lives. It is clear that based on our visit to the Houston Astros, it is difficult to educate these young boys. Many of them have dropped out of school; this makes it difficult to motivate them to learn anything, especially something as difficult as English. Another difficulty faced in this situation is the level of literacy of many of these boys. Some struggle to read Spanish; can you imagine how difficult English would be?

All of these factors play into the bigger picture of what baseball is. The sport of baseball is much more than the professional aspect or the sport in general. In the Dominican Republic, it is a way of life and sometimes a chance to escape. It is part of the culture in the Dominican Republic. While the sport itself is played in many countries, baseball is best way Dominicans identify themselves with their culture.

There is much more to the sport of baseball in the Dominican Republic than its link to Major League Baseball. While the MLB plays a major role in Dominican baseball, the people of the Dominican Republic have made it their own in more ways than one. It is a way to relate to someone you have never met before. The passion for
baseball in this country is incredible. Klein may have missed the true meaning of baseball because he was so concerned with the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Major League Baseball. The relationship between the two is still very important because MLB has impacted the way baseball is played here in the Dominican Republic. But to examine baseball as a whole in the Dominican, one must set aside that relationship to look at all of the other aspects of the game.

MLB has influenced baseball in the Dominican Republic in numerous ways. Through the last six weeks I have been able to experience a few of this firsthand. Through site visits to academies and working at local little leagues, I have learned about the passion of baseball in the Dominican Republic. While MLB may be the endgame, Dominican baseball is one of a kind. Through our visit to the MLB offices, were we given an inside look at MLB’s presence on the island.

**Essay 2**

Today there are many players in Major League Baseball from Latin America; many of these players call the Dominican Republic their home. Albert Pujols was raised in the Dominican Republic. His parents divorced at a young age so his grandmother and his father raised him. “My dad and my brother and my aunt and my uncle had to struggle sometimes to bring food to the table.” Pujols moved several times during his time in the Dominican Republic because several of his family members left to go to the United States. Eventually, Pujols and his father were the only people from his family left in the Dominican Republic.
“My dad figured out a way, either to borrow from a friend or something, to buy me a glove and a baseball bat. He figured out some way to support me. Watching my dad and my uncle play, that’s what inspired me the most, to play, to be like my dad…he was very good at the sport.” Pujols’ story is slightly different from the stereotypical story of most players from the Dominican; his father was present and a huge influence in his baseball career. Pujols began working very hard at baseball at the age of 12 or 13, recognized he had a gift for the game.

When he was 16 years old, Pujols and his father emigrated from the Dominican Republic to the United States to be with the rest of their family. In high school, Pujols spoke little English, but used baseball to deal with his transition. Pujols graduated high school in 1999 and played one season for Maple Woods Community College in the Kansas City area. The St. Louis Cardinals then drafted him in the 13th round. Pujols only spent one season in the minors before Mark McGuire urged his coach to put Pujols on the 2001 roster. That year Pujols was named the National League Rookie of the Year. His career in the major leagues has lasted 14 years. Albert Pujols fulfilled his dream of playing the big leagues without going through the typical pipeline most Latin American players’ use.

I was unaware of Pujols’ journey before researching him. Based on the information I found, Albert Pujols surpassed the little league system in the Dominican Republic. He also surpassed any contact with buscónes in the country. Because Albert Pujols immigrated to the United States, he was able to surpass a few levels of the global commodity chain. Instead of going through the system, Pujols was able to attend high
school in the United States. He was fortunate enough to attend a community college and be drafted through the US system instead of the Dominican Republic’s system.

Pujols surpassed the little leagues, outside trainers or buscónes, and the academy system. When the Cardinals signed Pujols, he went straight to the minor leagues without spending any extra time developing in an academy. Most of the information I gathered about Pujols came from his “I Am Second” video. At the end of the video, Pujols said, “I don’t want people to remember me as a baseball player. To me, off the field is more important than what I do on the field.” This mentality sets Pujols apart from many of his peers. Pujols does not necessarily fit into the narrative the MLB paints of Latin American players. His successes through the United States as well as his mentality of the game contradict the overall stereotype of all Dominican players. Although his love for the game is large, Pujols’ love for his family is even greater.

While Pujols is a great success story, there are many stories with not so happy endings. Through our internships with Daniel, we were able to work one on one with his players. He shared with us his experience in the minor league system and the reasoning behind coming home. We were also able to meet with El Indio and listen to his story.

**Essay 3**

Over the last several weeks, the question “Is Baseball Dominican?” has been hanging in the air. Through our site visits, we have seen many examples of Dominicans contributing to the development of baseball in the Dominican Republic. Some specific examples are Rudy and Daniel, the town of Consuelo, and Manny Acta.
Interning with Rudy and Daniel has been an amazing experience so far. We have been able to work one on one with many of the kids at Daniel’s little league. After hearing his story and learning about the mistakes he made, Daniel’s little league has much more of an impact on me. In the eyes of many, Daniel failed. He did not make it to the States to play in the MLB. He failed his family and his community. But the reality is that Daniel is contributing more to his community now than he ever would have been if he made it to the majors.

Daniel’s love for the game is easily recognized when he is on the field with all of his players. You can see the passion he has for baseball and the young boys he is teaching. During our visit, he told us he had the chance to work for an MLB team here in the Dominican Republic as a pitching coach. Instead, he has chosen to run a little league where he can influence the kids in his community. He wants to teach them the mental side of baseball and make sure they understand the importance of an education. Daniel Portorreal and Rudy Ramirez are both contributing to the baseball industry here in the Dominican Republic by giving kids in the community an opportunity to play baseball, even if it’s just for fun.

The town of Consuelo is also contributing to the baseball industry. We were able to visit the small town and learn about its history. Manny Acta, a former professional baseball manager who is currently a broadcast analyst for ESPN, bought a large plot of land and built several fields for his community of Consuelo. The Manny Acta Complejo Deportivo Y Educativo, Manny Acta Sport and Educational Complex, is allowing children in the community the chance to further their education and enjoy a sense of community through the sport of baseball. I was very impressed with the way Consuelo
valued education. They teach their kids that education is more valuable than baseball, but that baseball can still be fun. Through Manny Acta’s contribution to his hometown, the town of Consuelo can contribute to the baseball industry by providing a place for children to come and play.

One could argue that the buscónes in the country are also contributing to the baseball industry. This is true to a certain extent. Buscónes are shaping and molding players for the MLB. They are feeding into the system the MLB has constructed. But on the flipside, they are contributing to the baseball industry as a whole in the Dominican. Baseball in the Dominican Republic is so much more than just a sport; it’s a way of life. During our time on the island, we have experienced this in many ways. We have not been able to go to the beach once without someone asking to play catch with us. The boys at the little leagues could seriously play ball for hours. Baseball news is on the front page of the papers. Players in the academies eat, sleep, and play baseball (with a little bit of English thrown in there). The Dominican Republic is one place baseball thrives. With or without the MLB’s presence, baseball is Dominican.

**Essay 4**

In looking at the pipeline Dominicans must go through to make it to the big leagues, the main problem that is present is education. You cannot examine the baseball industry in the Dominican Republic and ignore the education, or lack thereof, in the system. Young boys leaving school early to focus on baseball and the lack of education in the academy systems are just two examples of a bigger problem in the pipeline.
This week we visited the New York Mets Baseball Academy. My overall impression was very positive; the facilities were phenomenal and it seemed that the players were pretty well off. But the most impressive aspect of the academy was their education system. The Mets currently have four different levels of English being taught at their academy. The teacher-student ratio is no more than 10 players to each teacher. These simple facts show how well the Mets are doing in regard to the education in their portion of the pipeline. The Mets also offer Dominican players the opportunity to complete their high school education during four hours each week. From the information I have been given, this is not common amongst most of the academies here in the Dominican Republic. A high school education is usually forfeited at the expense of a chance at the major leagues.

While the Mets Academy seems to be doing well in the education department, what does this mean for other academies? During our visit to the Houston Astros Baseball Academy, the English teacher explained the difficulties that come with attempting to teach these players English. Many of these young boys quit school to pursue a career in baseball; now you want to make them go to school and learn a foreign language. This task in and of itself is daunting. But what about a high school education? Is English the most important thing for this players to learn? Or should someone take responsibility for furthering the players education once admitted to the academies?

In my opinion, Major League Baseball needs to take responsibility for the education of their players. On the flipside, I do not agree with the idea that the MLB is solely responsible for the lack of education in the baseball system. The narrative that Dominican players need to be 16 years old when they sign has been enforced by the
MLB, but they do not encourage young boys to quit school to focus on baseball. This narrative is inadvertently causing boys to quit school to devote all of their time and effort to improving their baseball skills. Because most of these players who enter the academy system are lacking in terms of their education, the MLB should step up and provide services to help these young boys grow as people and not simply baseball players.

In the last ten years, the MLB has made tremendous strides in the right direction when it comes to education. But an English education is simply not enough. Many of the players in the academy system do not make it to states to play in the MLB. What happens to those players who lack a high school education? If the MLB were to provide these players the opportunity to finish their high school education while at the academies, it would give them a better chance to make a life in the Dominican Republic if they do not move up the ranks and make it to the states. While this responsibility should not fall solely on the MLB, this is the reality.

In my opinion, one of the biggest issues of the baseball system in the Dominican Republic is education. After going on several site visits and listening to experiences from my classmates, I have learned that education is not necessarily a priority when it comes to MLB. The pipeline these players must travel through in order to make it to the big leagues has some holes. Suggestions about an international draft have been thrown around. Comparing this system to that of Cuba has also been considered. But instead of implementing a new system or starting an international draft, why not fix the problems here first?
Essay 5

The Dominican Republic has a very interesting and unique pipeline for their players to enter the baseball industry. While many countries link baseball and other sports to their school systems, the Dominican Republic does not link the two. The Dominican Republic does not have a formal system for baseball linked to their school systems. The baseball industry is separate from any form of education. We learned in class that several other Latin American countries link baseball to education. In the United States, we also have sports teams that are run through school systems.

Aside from the ties to education, the Dominican Republic is also unique because of the academy system MLB has in place in the country. I believe the academy system sets the Dominican Republic apart from all other Latin American countries. Players in the Dominican Republic have the opportunity to sign with an MLB team and enter the academy system with the chance to make it to the states to play professionally at a higher level. Many players from other Latin American countries still have the chance to come to the Dominican Republic and sign with an MLB team; but the number of Dominicans signed is much greater than that of players from other countries. So does this give Dominicans an advantage when it comes to participating in the global industry? Some would argue yes while others would argue no.

I believe the academy system gives Dominican players a better opportunity to enter the system. While many of the players do not make it to the states, they are still given a chance some players from other countries are not given. The academy system plays a major role in the baseball industry, especially on a global level. It allows players
from other countries to participate in Major League Baseball; this has made Major League Baseball prominent on the global level.

With the academy system and numerous players from foreign countries comes the idea of the international draft. I am still unsure of my opinion on the draft. Based on our discussion in class, MLB cannot expect all players from foreign countries to be on the same level and be able to enter the draft at the same time. Many of these players have come through different pipelines on their journey to the big leagues. In Cuba, players are encouraged to play sports throughout their school years. They are given support from the government and encouraged to play while getting an education. In the Dominican Republic, many players drop out of school at a young age to train in hopes they will one day be signed by an academy. These players are often signed at the age of 16. Who’s to say young Dominican players will be at the same level as an 18-year-old Cuban? Then comes the question of regulations for the international draft.

If the MLB were to implement an international draft, it would be difficult to place regulations other than an age requirement that would enforce a level playing field among all of the prospects. A requirement of a high school education would not be realistic because of the different qualities of education among countries around the world. An international draft would make the academy system obsolete. An international draft would forever change baseball’s presence among foreign countries. It would change the way Dominicans, as well as other Latin American players go about preparing for a career in baseball. The pipeline Dominicans have in place is unique, but the possibility of an international draft could change it completely.
At the beginning of the course, our main focus was the following question: Is baseball Dominican? After several weeks of being immersed in the baseball industry in the Dominican Republic, my answer would be yes. We completed the course with a debate about whether or not Dominican baseball needs Major League Baseball. Could Dominicans do it on their own? My personal opinion is yes. Dominicans were producing talent long before MLB had a presence in the country. Would things be more difficult? Sure. The system might not look the same. The structure would be a little different. But the passion I have seen over the last six weeks proves that Dominicans own baseball in the Dominican Republic. MLB might be the end game, but they are not the only game played here on the island.

**Week 1 Reflection: Introducing “Cultural Studies” and “Sport”**

I hate to admit this – but before we began this course, I had never really sat down and examined culture in relation to sports. But after completing the readings and discussing in class, I realized sports place a HUGE role in culture. I really liked the phrase we discussed in class – What do they know of “baseball” only “baseball” knows? This statement can really apply to any topic. One does not have to merely participate in something to know what it’s about. Sometimes it is easier to academically critique a topic when you are on the outside looking in rather than basing your opinion simply on experiences.

An excerpt from Sport Without Guarantees says, “Being able to deconstruct the dialogic process within a Nike commercial is one thing; connecting them to the exploitative economic production of the shoes themselves in Southeast Asia, through to
their consumption in the deprived inner-cities of the West and the meanings this produces is quite another, and a process too often not addressed (p. 402).” I think Carrington was trying to point out the fact that it is difficult to analyze the background of sports through a cultural lens. It is one thing to examine the business side for example; the cultural study of sport is a completely different avenue.

If we take this concept and look at baseball in the Dominican Republic, we can see the cultural effects this sport has had on the country as a whole. Baseball is not merely a sport in the Dominican Republic; it is a way of life. The sport has had such an impact on culture in this country. I have been able to experience the culture of baseball in the few short days I have been in the country.

But I have also noticed the side effects baseball has had. Many of the young boys who do not make it to the majors will end up back in a system consisting of poverty. Most of these boys have dropped out of school to work on baseball; this means they have no education when reentering the community. The concept of white supremacy plays a major part in this system.

As we discussed in class, people from the United States (“the white man”) have come to the Dominican Republic to “fix” the way Dominicans run their baseball system. The MLB has taken the baseball industry under their wing and attempted to make it their own. The main problem with this system is the lack of empathy from the MLB teams. When choosing which players they will sign and bring to the United States, they easily forget the other boys who will be dumped back into the unstable economic system of their country.
This all plays into the dependency theory. Dependency theory essentially argues that less-developed countries will be unable to develop because the rich world uses them as the equivalent of colonies. That is, the rich world uses the less-developed countries as sources of raw materials and of cheap labor but never lets those countries get to where they can have major domestic industries of their own.

A prime example of this is the relationship between the United States and third world countries from which they extract oil. The relationship between the United States and the Dominican Republic in reference to baseball can be viewed through this lens as well. The Dominican Republic will never be able to advance its baseball industry if the USA continues to extract their “raw materials,” i.e., baseball players.

The idea of dependency theory swings back to the discussion in class – white supremacy. As stated earlier, the MLB viewed the baseball industry here in the Dominican Republic as broken. Their goal was to come in and “fix” the problem with these academies. The idea itself is good; but the results say otherwise when young boys end up back on the streets without any education.

**Week 2: Baseball and Cultures of the Pan-Caribbean**

When dealing with sports, sometimes it’s easy to forget outside issues such as race. But when the rosters of each team contain numerous players from different countries, the issue cannot simply be ignored. To examine the issue of race in baseball, you must first examine the history of the sport in the United States.

Through the readings in class, we were able to look at the relationship “organized baseball” in the United States had with not only the black community, but the Latino
community as well. I say “organized baseball” in the United States because at the time, 
the MLB had not yet been created. I found the whole dynamic between the two very 
interesting. The acceptance of some Cubans and Puerto Ricans based on their ability to 
speak Spanish versus the denial of certain players based on their “blackness” was hard to 
wrap my head around.

In What Kind of Country is This?, I found the line, “how crazy the whole question 
of race is in America – if you speak Spanish you’re somehow not as black,” the most 
interesting part of our readings. The ability to speak a different language gave certain 
players rights other black players did not receive. Some of the things mentioned in the 
readings were access to certain restaurants and discrimination in different parts of town. 
Latin American and black players were forced to stay in different hotels than the rest of 
their teammates.

While the amount of racism in the baseball system must have been difficult to 
deal with, Vic Power did an amazing job handling the discrimination thrown his way. 
“In short, the Puerto Rican did not possess the “right attitude.” At the core of their 
grievance was Power’s apparent relationship with a white woman. The white woman in 
question turned out to be his wife, a Puerto Rican who enjoyed wearing blond wigs.” 
Through this and other instances, Vic Power was able to hold his own in the system. He 
did not care one way or another if the people in the United States accepted him.

Before taking this Cultural Studies course, I never considered the idea of race 
being an issue with Latin American players. Everyone is aware of the issues with 
African Americans in baseball because of the history that comes along with Jackie 
Robinson. But few people are aware of the difficulties Latin American players faced in
their transition to the states. This brings me to the present issue—Latin American players in the United States today.

Dominican, as well as other Latin American players, may not face the same discrimination Latin American players faced some 50 years ago. But these players still face hardships when coming to the United States. The system the MLB uses to bring players from Latin America to the states is flawed. The issue of race may not be as evident today as it has been in the past in regard to baseball; but one cannot argue that race is a nonissue in the sports world.

**Week 3: Hacedores/The Hustle: Culture, Poverty, and Dominican baseball**

Hacedores, or the hustle, is a fitting theme for our week. I am slowly realizing how much corruption there actually is in the Dominican Republic and more specifically the baseball industry. We have discussed the issues of race as well as the culture here in the Dominican Republic. But nothing struck me more than Jose Bautista’s article *Left Out*.

In Ruck’s *Raceball*, we have examined many issues surrounding the baseball industry here in the Dominican Republic. *Raceball* was published in 2011; Bautista’s article was published in April of 2015. I am amazed that the Dominican Republic is still facing such issues as those discussed in *Raceball*.

The idea of the academy system is great. I will be the first to say that I completely see where the MLB is coming from: signing amazing players for less than players in the US. “But what those kids don’t get is an education. MLB has made major strides in the last 10 years in building facilities in my country, but every year, hundreds of
prospects fizzle out of baseball and head back into the real world with nothing to show for the thousands of hours they’ve devoted to this game,” Bautista explained in his article. Am I saying the MLB is completely at fault here? No. What I am saying is that they can do more.

One of the biggest issues in the system here in the Dominican Republic is education, more specifically the language barrier. “But here’s the difference between you and them: Most of those kids are released back into the world with a sixth grade education — something that is not just unthinkable but illegal in America. What are they supposed to do, go back to sixth grade at age 20? They don’t have any technical skills. They can’t be an electrician or a mechanic. They’ve spent 10 years of their life being only one thing: a baseball player,” Bautista argues. These players do not know what life is like without baseball.

The counter side of this argument is the opportunity the MLB provides to players from the Dominican Republic. The system is flawed and both sides are to blame. But there are plenty of success stories we must acknowledge. The story of Puig is a great example of a player who, through many trials, made it to the US and is succeeding in the world of baseball. But the story of Puig brings up another issue discussed this week – “The Church of Baseball.”

“The Church of Baseball” can loosely be defined as those in the baseball industry who do not want to accept change. Puig is changing the way baseball is played. But is that so wrong? Over the years there have been many changes to the game. Simply put, the integration of African American and Latin American players in baseball changed the way the game is played. The way Puig plays does not necessarily follow the rules of
“The Church of Baseball.” But maybe it’s time to accept the changes. Baseball, along with every other sport, will change with time.

No one person can control the game of baseball. In the Dominican Republic, no one is 100% to blame. The MLB is a business; but they are also a business dealing with 16-year-old boys. Puig’s “flash” is bringing something new to the table. Some things need to change in the system, just as “The Church of Baseball” needs to accept certain changes.

Week 4: Black Baseball – The Dominican Case

Before coming to the Dominican Republic, I was unaware of the racial tension in the country. Learning about the possible deportation of Haitians has been very interesting, especially because we are here in the midst of it.

When examining the racial dynamic in the Dominican Republic, one might be slightly confused. The idea of race in this culture is one of ambiguity. Mulato, dominicano, negro, indio, chino, blanco, rubio, latino, and moreno are just a few of the many terms to describe race in the Dominican Republic. In my short time here in the Dominican Republic, I was seen so many different skin tones. I have seen the lightest of light to the darkest of dark and everything in between. It’s no wonder people are confused by the racial relations in the country, Dominicans included.

“We are the only country in the whole of Latin America not to have claimed our independence from Spain. We claimed ours from Haiti. And although that was halfway through the last century, there is still the idea that we have to look for a way of separating ourselves from the country which conquered us for more than twenty years, hence the
temptation to seek in Spain something that will distinguish us from the other part of the island." This excerpt from *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic* by David Howard explains one of the reasons behind the tension between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The declaration of independence from Haiti is one small issue the Dominican Republic has with Haiti. While this reasoning does not completely explain the racial tensions, it does give an inside look as to what is going on in the Dominican Republic in regard to race.

The concept of whiteness is prevalent not only in the Dominican Republic, but all around the world. White supremacy is a concept many people must deal with on an everyday basis. Here in the Dominican Republic, whiteness equates to “denying one’s blackness and African roots.” But this is not always the case. Many Dominicans acknowledge their African ancestry. The problem is not necessarily the denial of one ancestry over another; one of the main problems is the color line. There is no one single line. The lines are blurred and many Dominicans may fall between two different categories.

One example of the color lines being blurred and the desire for whiteness is Sammy Sosa. Sosa used a skin whitening cream to lighten his skin color. When confronted about it, Sosa claimed the cream was used for his skin because he was afraid of the damage the sun had caused to his skin. One might argue that his reasoning was false and that Sosa wanted to fit into the “whiteness” category. My argument is that most Dominicans are taught from the get go that to be white is to be better. They are fed this idea of white supremacy and many of them witness the privileges “whiter” Dominicans
receive. I’m not saying Sosa was correct in whitening his skin; but I can somewhat understand where he was coming from.

Race in the Dominican Republic is a very confusing and interesting dynamic. I would be interested to speak to a few Dominicans and Haitians to hear their opinions on the matter.

**Week 5: The Social Distance between Black and Negro**

The idea of blackness in the Dominican Republic has been one of the highlights of our course the last few weeks. But this idea was much more prominent to me this week when we examined the article “Translating Blackness” by Lorgia García-Peña. The idea of viewing blackness through the eye of the United States took me by surprise. When I first read the article, I did not fully understand this concept of viewing blackness in relation to the United States.

When Raj used the idea of “black supremacy” in the United States, everything clicked for me. I realized that many other cultures look to the United States for many things, even “blackness” and how to interpret it. The fact that the Dominican in Italy called out Obama and used the term negro instead of moreno makes the whole issue that much more interesting. “The man in Milan's performance of blackness, I argue, derives from an awareness of “black” as a product of US cultural, political and economic imposition in the world. Therefore, to be black in the world—that is, to have access to the discourse of social dissent that can result in one's positionality as an interlocutor of power and history—it is necessary to enter blackness as theorized and mediated by the US empire.” This quote says volumes.
Dominican blackness, along with Haitian blackness, is looked at through blackness in the United States. During our discussion in class, we talked about viewing slavery in relation to slavery in the United States. We discussed how the revolution in Haiti is not taken as seriously because it does not fit the narrative the US revolution has painted.

This plays hand in hand with the Haitian-Dominican conflict that is currently happening in the country. The international media is painting the picture of Dominicans being racist because it fits the narrative we can accept. In the US, we have a difficult time accepting anything other than racism as we see it: one race discriminating against another. So the international media is covering the story and making it fit that narrative.

Before examining this issue in class, I did not realize how much of an ethnographic view I had of the world.

The idea of race in the Dominican Republic is very complicated. I would not consider Dominicans confused when it comes to their race; many accept their ancestry, Spanish, African, and Taíno. The problem arises when you try to determine “what you are.” Dominicans are simply that, Dominicans. When you try to examine race relations at a deeper level, that’s when things get complicated.

The main takeaway I have from this course in regard to race is that it is so much more than a label. Race is also not simply your biological ancestry. It is not always the way you identify yourself. It’s also not the only way people view you as a person. With your race comes culture and history; identifying as a certain race does not define you as a person. This course has taught me to examine race relations from a different point of view. Race is much more complicated than the color of your skin.
Dominican Baseball: Colonized or Not?

Baseball in the Dominican Republic is not much different from baseball in the United States, or at least on the surface. Three strikes lead to three outs played for seven to nine innings. There is an away team and a home team. When you hit the ball, you run to first base. The team with the most runs wins at the end of the game. On the surface, baseball is the same no matter where you are. But when digging deeper, you realize there is so much more to the sport than what meets the eye, especially in the Dominican Republic.

During the last six weeks, I have changed my opinion about the Dominican Republic more times than I can count. Education in the Dominican Republic is subpar when comparing it to the United States. The baseball industry in the Dominican Republic is subpar when comparing it to the United States. The standard of living in the Dominican Republic is subpar when comparing it to the United States. But here’s the
thing: you cannot examine the Dominican Republic through the eyes of the United States. Looking at this wonderful country with an ethnocentric, United States view will give you a skewed, misrepresented version of the Dominican Republic. But if you can take this country at face value and appreciate it for what it has to offer, you will learn all about what this great island truly is.

If you were to examine the baseball industry in the Dominican Republic through the eyes of the United States, and more specifically Major League Baseball, you might be disappointed in the system here. One could argue that the Dominican Republic lacks structure without the MLB academy system. The Dominican Republic lacks a formal
baseball system in relation to education. The little leagues in the Dominican Republic do not resemble little leagues in the States. Baseball in the Dominican Republic is not baseball in the United States. So how much has MLB done in the country to change this? How much has MLB “colonized” baseball in the Dominican Republic?

To colonize is to send a group of settlers to a place and establish political control over it. Some would say MLB has gained control of the baseball industry in the Dominican Republic through their mere presence in the country. MLB opened their international office in 2000, approximately 20 years after MLB teams implemented academies in the country. MLB’s presence in the country through their international offices and individual team academies has indeed colonized the sport in terms of organization and structure. “Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another…The term colony comes from the Latin word colonus, meaning farmer. This root reminds us that the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin.” This definition from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that in order for the relationship between MLB and Dominican baseball to be considered colonialism, a transfer of population must be present. The increasing number of Dominican players in the MLB proves there is a transfer of human capital from the Dominican Republic to the United States. When looking at the relationship with this definition in mind, the MLB has indeed colonized Dominican baseball to a certain extent. But how has this colonization affected the Dominican Republic?
Through our readings and site visits I have gained an understanding about the baseball system in the Dominican Republic. When examining the colonization of the sport, there are several different aspects you can examine. The academy system seems to be the biggest thing Major League Baseball has done in the Dominican Republic. Education, age requirements, and the process to getting to the academies all effect the way the system works in the Dominican Republic. In Rob Ruck’s book Raceball, he examines “how the major leagues colonized the black and Latin game.” I turned to his work as a starting point for this argument.

Rob Ruck examines the integration of black and Caribbean players into the MLB and what effects the integration has had on the communities. “Although long overdue and a catalyst to social change, integration cost black and Caribbean societies control over their own sporting lives. It changed the meaning of sport, and not usually for the better. While channeling black and Latino athletes into major league baseball, integration
did little for the communities they left behind. On the contrary, it actively destroyed or weakened institutions in the black community and the Caribbean. (Ruck, 2011, loc. 134)” During my time on the island, I have experienced many things that disprove this quote from Rob Ruck’s book Raceball. For Ruck to claim that black and Caribbean societies lost “control over their own sporting lives” is an overgeneralization.

Dominicans have not lost ownership of baseball. I also do not agree with Ruck’s point that integration “did little for the communities they left behind.” During my internship, I was able to work with Daniel Portorreal and Rudy Ramirez and their little leagues. Daniel worked his way through the baseball system and played for a Major League team at a lower level. He returned to the Dominican Republic and started his own little league. He is giving back to his community. Pedro Martinez donated money to build Rudy Ramirez’s field. There are numerous Dominicans who have made it to the Major Leagues who continuously give back to their home country. To claim that Caribbean societies have been “destroyed or weakened” because of MLB’s presence is foolish.
Through site visits and my own personal internship I was able to experience Dominican baseball on a more personal level. I witnessed firsthand how communities in the Dominican Republic have not lost “control of their own sporting lives.” During our site visit to the Mets Academy we were lucky enough to meet Ozzie Virgil, the first Dominican to play in Major League Baseball. “The click of the bats keeps me alive.” In my opinion, this quote from Ozzie says it all. Dominican baseball is so much more than a sport. The MLB has not ruined baseball for Dominicans. They have a sense of ownership when it comes to baseball. The pride they have for players from the Dominican Republic is incomparable. When speaking with Ozzie, you could see the passion he has for the sport. That same passion is within most Dominicans. Playing baseball with the boys at the little leagues showed me that there is no certain age requirement for the love of the game. MLB’s colonization of Dominican baseball has not changed the way the game is played.
As stated earlier, the academy system is the biggest influence MLB has had on the country as a whole in terms of baseball. The pipeline players must go through in order to make it to an academy is made up of a few different parts. Usually children play in some sort of little league starting out. These little leagues are much different than those in the states. Then players will continue training with an independent trainer or buscón. From there the hope is to sign with a Major League team and enter the academy system. This system allows players to sign at the age of 16. Players must be able to submit accurate documents verifying their age. Major League Baseball has also implemented an investigation process. When looking at the process the MLB has in place, it is easy to argue that they have colonized the baseball system in the Dominican Republic. Major League Baseball has entered the Dominican Republic and gained control over certain aspects of the baseball industry. I cannot argue that MLB has not colonized baseball in
the Dominican Republic. My argument is simply that Dominicans have more control over the sport as a whole. I would even argue that Major League Baseball is dependent upon Dominicans to produce talent. Until the age of 16, Dominicans are training players. It is not until a player signs that the MLB has any influence on them. Major League Baseball may indeed be the endgame for many players; but the love of the game outweighs any influence the MLB might have on baseball in the Dominican Republic.

Ruck argues that MLB’s presence in Caribbean countries has had a very negative effect. “By imposing its imperial will on black America and the Caribbean, MLB has
achieved unprecedented prosperity, but gutted the game at the grass roots along the way. Baseball has never been stronger as a business, never weaker as a game. (Ruck, 2011, loc. 138)” Based on my experiences in the Dominican Republic, I strongly disagree with this quote from Rob Ruck. The game of baseball is not a business; the sport is played all over the world. Major League Baseball is a business, and a business that is succeeding. But baseball is much more than the business side of things with MLB; it is the passion of the game. Baseball is part of the culture in the Dominican Republic. When the 10-year-olds are playing baseball on dirt fields with rocks and trash everywhere at Daniel’s, they are simply playing a game with their friends. When those same boys are playing vitilla with a group of “Americanos,” they are simply playing a game. There is no business about it.

The last six weeks have taught me more about the baseball industry than I could have imagined. I have witnessed what it means to be truly passionate about something. I
feel like I learned the most from my internship with the little leagues. Every single day the boys were so excited to see us. My team learned my name the first time I worked with them. The language barrier did not stop them from talking my ear off and making me participate in each and every play. The passion Daniel has for baseball is seen through his work with the young boys. I was so amazed by the baseball knowledge these players had at the age of 10. There is so much more to the sport than Major League Baseball. The MLB may have colonized the sport by extracting players and controlling the system, but the love of the game outweighs any influence Major League Baseball has had. I am so thankful I was fortunate enough to travel to the Dominican Republic and experience the culture firsthand. After six weeks, I have come to the conclusion that Major League Baseball is indeed the best baseball in the world; but Dominican baseball has twice as much heart.
**BLOG POSTS**

**It’s the start of something new**

I think I am going to sweat off 30 pounds while I am here.

I am safe and sound in my bedroom at my host family’s apartment. My flights went as smooth as they could have possibly gone without any problems. I took a taxi to my study abroad center and from there my host mother picked me up.

I have learned that regardless of what I thought, I know absolutely ZERO Spanish. The next six weeks are going to be very interesting based on this fact alone. One of the things I wasn’t prepared for was the poverty of this country. I knew it was the economy wasn’t the best, but I was not expecting to see some of the things I have in the few hours I have been here.

While driving down the road today, I saw five people on one motorcycle. FIVE – two adults and three children. I am still confused as to how they made it work. While the poverty was a shock, I am forever grateful for my host family. I am very impressed with my living quarters – my own room with a full bed, running water for a shower, my tummy is full, and I have access to the Internet. Oh, and I have a television. I am currently watching the NBA Finals.

This evening a girl in my program, Ilana, and her roommate Rebecca came to my apartment and we went on a walk. Our apartment complex is about three blocks from the water – water that is polluted with sewage, which means no swimming anytime soon (unless we drive 30-45 minutes away to another beach.)
We experienced our first of many catcalls this evening. A man said, “Come on, baby. I know you want it. I LOVE YOU!” That made for a little humor this evening. I have spent my evening unpacking and getting settled into my new home. My host mother’s name is Sonia and she doesn’t speak a lick of English. I have a host sister named Paulo (I may have butchered that spelling) who speaks fluent English, PRAISE THE LORD. They are both so sweet and hospitable. I have seriously lucked out so far. I have orientation in the morning so I will have a better understanding of what the next few weeks will entail. I am more than excited to get this journey started!

Also, I had ice cream cake after dinner tonight. How great is that?!?!?

Sí, sí!

I still do not know Spanish and I am still alive.

We experienced our first blackout today. This made me SO grateful for electricity, even for the simplicity of a fan blowing hot air. Blackouts are common in Santo Domingo. Many people do not have back up generators so you go without power for a few hours. Fortunately, my apartment still had running water so I was able to take a shower when I returned home.

This afternoon we were able to purchase Dominican cell phones for about US$18 or RD$795. We will now be able to communicate with each other here in Santo Domingo.

I am wishing more and more that I knew more Spanish. I am struggling with keeping up with conversations amongst my study abroad group. I am not the only one
who does not speak Spanish, but I would still like to be more involved. I am listening intently and slowly picking up some words.

Tomorrow we will travel to a Little League Academy to work with some of the players. I am beyond excited about this trip.

We found out we will have Fridays free other than our internships. This Friday we plan to travel to a nearby beach for the day. Thursday nights there is dancing in the square and Sundays they have a huge street party. EVERY Thursday and Sunday. I am so grateful for my host mother. She is so kind. I have not had to ask for a single thing since I arrived yesterday. She did my laundry even though I told her she didn’t have to do it today. My bed is always ready to sleep in when I return home. Food is always at my disposal. She has cleaned my room (not that it was dirty or messy.) I am blown away at her hospitality.

I am exhausted. My phone says we walked 6.5 miles, but I know for a fact we walked more because I did not have my phone all day. My feet hurt as well as my back. I am definitely going to get back in shape just from all of this walking.

For now I am headed to bed. Buenos noches.

**Hard vs. Soft Water**

I love my study abroad group more and more every day. We seem to just click without even trying. Everyone in the group is sarcastic and sassy (PRAISE THE LORD, I’m not the only one.) They are a great group of people who I see myself keeping in touch with for a long time.
Today we traveled to a little league training academy on the other side of the city. We had to take a bus through the slums to get to the camp. Daniel Portorreal, a former minor league player, was in charge of the Little League Training Academy. Daniel played A-ball with the San Francisco Giants before a mistake cost him everything in the USA. Daniel told us today he was aware of his mistake and regrets what he did, but that his mistake has led him to running his own training camp.

Upon arriving at the camp, we were immediately placed into a batting line up and went up against the 8-10 year old team. The sad part of the whole day – we actually had to try while playing against them. (I got a base hit both times I went to bat; I am proud.) The best part of the entire game was Kyle, a guy with our program who plays baseball in college, getting caught in a pickle. We had such an amazing time. A couple people from our program will be placed at this little league for their internship throughout the program.

We all spent the afternoon at home resting and catching up on our reading for class on Thursday. This evening we went out to watch the NBA Finals at a local restaurant. I have thoroughly enjoyed all of my time here thus far.

Tomorrow we will travel to the Houston Astros academy and watch a Dominican Summer League game. We will get to meet some of the prospects and talk with the managers.

Through my experiences so far, I am constantly reminded how blessed I am in the United States. I am very ungrateful – I plan to work on this and change my negative thoughts about not having certain things to positive/grateful thoughts about what I do have.
The slums today reminded me of my time in Venezuela. Often times I forget that there are many places around the world where the standard of living is far below anything I could even imagine. I am so thankful God blessed me with the life I have, but I am also thankful for this humbling experience as a reminder not everyone is as fortunate. Reflecting on my time so far, I am sure I will be a different person upon completing the six weeks. I look forward to seeing how much I learn and grow as a person because of the experiences I will have throughout the next month and a half.

Side note – I completely forgot to check my email yesterday. I am SO sorry, Drew Eckels and Lacee’ Carmon-Johnson. I love you both dearly and I promise I am on top of it now!

Chances are most of you, myself included, forget how blessed we truly are in the states. Remember to be grateful for all that you have. Keep yourself humble.

Classes, Culture, and Connections

Classes began today. I must admit, I completely forgot I was taking courses when I first arrived a few days ago. But my professors quickly reminded me of that fact when they arrived yesterday.

I will be taking Cultural Studies of Caribbean Sport and Ethical Issues in Sports and Development. My professors are Raj Chetty and April Yoder. If you are bored, Google them – them are kind of awesome.

Today we discussed whether or not baseball is still the USA’s pastime. Some of us agreed that baseball most definitely WAS USA’s pastime, but it no longer holds the importance it once did.
We also discussed the idea of culture and white supremacy. I will elaborate more on this tomorrow because I am currently exhausted and it is time for sleep.

Tonight we went out to dinner in the colonial zone. I am constantly reminded of how much I adore my study abroad group.

I apologize for the simplicity of this post – sleep is calling my name. Until tomorrow….

Guayacanes Gypped

I am coming to realize this whole living in a foreign country this is exhausting, hence my lack of posts the last two days.

Yesterday we spent the day at the beach. We traveled to one of the nearest beaches, Guayacanes. At the beginning of our trip our goal was to get the Dominican experience. When we arrived at the beach, we picked a few tables and hit the water immediately. After about an hour or so, we were ready for lunch.

We spoke to a few people on the beach as well as our van driver. We were given two options – get back on our van and drive down the road to a restaurant or buy food from a man who ran a shack with fish freshly caught. We decided if we were going to have a “local” experience, we might as well go with the shack man.

We waited about an hour for our food. When we ordered, we made sure to ask how much our lunch would be altogether – four fish, two orders of shrimp, rice, beans, and plantains – 850 pesos. When our food arrived, we were amazed.

We got much more than we bargained for. We had a wonderful lunch and enjoyed the rest of our afternoon. But this was when things got interesting. A group of
baseball players showed up at the beach as we were finishing our meal. A couple of the guys in our group decided to join them in their foot races. This led to a game of pitch and catch. The group of us girls went out into the water where we were catcalled for a while.

After returning to our tables, a few of the players came over and sat with us. Because of the language barrier, I needed a translator. Basically, one of the players thought I was cute and wanted my telephone number. Long story short, I was proposed to on Facebook last night.

Graviel played for the Orioles at one point. And I think he currently plays for Licey, one of the professional teams here in the Dominican Republic. I say think because a lot of things are lost in translation and Google Translate/my friend Imani can only do some much.

After spending the afternoon with the baseball team, we asked for our check from the shack man. It took him at least an hour to bring us our ticket. What we thought was going to be an 850 peso check turned out to be a 12,900 peso check. To give you a better understanding, 1 dollar is 44.5 pesos – 850 pesos = 19.1 dollars; 12,900 pesos = 290 dollars. Needless to say, we were not happy.

Imani and Ilana, two girls in my group, proceeded to argue with the shack man about the price, more specifically about the fact that he lied to us in the beginning. It was a long hour of debating and counting our money to make sure we had enough to get home. We finally settled on paying him about half and learned a very valuable lesson: never eat from somewhere that does not have a menu with specific prices. You will get screwed.
Through this experience we learned a few valuable things: Dominican men fall in love quick. Don’t trust everyone you meet. Dominican baseball players can be a lot of fun. Make sure you have your professors’ cell phone numbers. While this experience wasn’t the best, we still had a great time at the beach. We probably will not be returning to Guaycanes anytime soon, but we still had a blast.

**DR to BG: Returning to the States**

Reporting from Bowling Green, Kentucky:

I have been back in the states for a week and a half now and I am still trying to adjust. Life in the states is so much different than I remember. Don’t get me wrong, six weeks really isn’t a long time. But it was just long enough for me to adjust to life in the Dominican and to forget simple things about the United States.

My first day back in the states I realized that is was going to take me a little time to readjust. While in the DR, I entered into a routine of ignoring men on the street because of the constant catcalls and inappropriate statements they would make. Monday morning I was walking into work and blatantly ignored a gentleman until he spoke to me saying, “Good morning! How are you today?” It took me a good 10 seconds to realize A) he spoke to me in English, and B) he was genuinely being nice. This is just a simple example of how transitioning back to the states would take some time.

I catch myself responding to some things in Spanish in my head. I am constantly craving freshly cut mango. Anytime I see a green van, I immediately think it’s our taxi driver, Roberto. I miss all of my study abroad friends and the constant sarcasm within
our group. I find myself wishing I could have one more afternoon in the smothering heat playing with my sweet Dominican boys on their dirt ball field.

During my time in the Dominican Republic, I learned SO MUCH. It is impossible for me to explain everything I learned. As cliché as it sounds, I really did change as a person. I realized that some of the things I valued before don’t really matter all that much. I learned to appreciate my home more than I ever did in the past. I learned a small amount of Spanish, which made me realize I desperately want to learn the language in the near future. I am so thankful for the friendships I made while abroad. I learned so much and I want to share as much as possible with as many people as I can.

Upon returning, I am disappointed in myself because of my lacking of blogging. The courses I was taking required a weekly paper and several responses to the site visits and excursions. I was so exhausted after writing my required papers that I simply went to sleep (at 10pm..). Now my life consists of writing for my thesis. My poor blog is suffering. But my hope is that these experiences will stay with me and I will continue to grow because of them. My thesis will allow me to reflect on my experiences and I cannot wait to share it with you all!

Much love from Spencer’s,

“La Americana” Sarah
PHOTOS

Five baseball fields on the island; seen from airplane window
My desk in my host family’s home
Windows over my bed in my host family’s home

Picture of my bedroom in my host family’s home
My host family’s apartment complex

One of the fields I spent time at during my internship
Houston Astros academy

Field at the Houston Astros academy
Kansas City Royals and Houston Astros Dominican Summer League game
Houston Astros player
Kansas City Royals dugout at the Houston Astros academy

Houston Astros huddle during game against Kansas City Royals
Batting cage at Houston Astros academy

Schedule of classes for players at the Houston Astros academy
Manny Acta’s Sports and Education Complex in San Pedro de Macoris

Imani Mitchell spoke with one of the players at Manny Acta’s complex
One of the professional facilities for the Dominican Winter League

A young boy rides a bicycle without a front wheel in the city
A player warms up on one of the fields I spent time at during my internship

Pedro Martinez’s field; Martinez renovated this field after making it to the major leagues
Sign in the MLB International Office in Santo Domingo that read “Baseball is spoken here” in several different languages

At the MLB International office in Santo Domingo
Ilana Mishkin arm wrestles with one of the boys at the little league

One family dries their clothes outside on the fence
One of the fields I spent time at during my internship

A home behind the field I spent time at during my internship
Playing baseball at one of the little leagues

A couple young boys entertain themselves after baseball practice
A water purifying station

A colmado; comparable to a convenient mart or gas station (without the gas) in the United States
A barber shop on the street

Several boys from the little league hold the Dominican flag and sign their national anthem
Kyle Gutowski carries one of the players on his shoulders during the championship walk through town
Players and parents walk back to the field after the championship walk through town.

The first pitch is thrown before the championship game at the little league.
Trash gathers in the ocean on the coast in Santo Domingo

A professional facility for the Dominican Winter League
Caribbean Confederation of Professional Baseball

New York Mets players wait for their turn to play at the academy
New York Mets Dominican Baseball Academy

Signs in a classroom at the New York Mets Academy
New York Mets Academy locker room

Ozzie Virgil, the first Dominican to play in Major League Baseball (1956)
Miguel Tejada, Joaquin Arias, and Manny Ramirez pictures displayed in the Aguilas stadium; Dominican Winter League team

Players sit on the wall with other continue to play baseball at the little league
Players sit among litter, waiting for their turn at bat

Players assign positions and the batting order without direction from a coach
Player walks up for his turn at bat