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Major league baseball franchises and their minor league players: Maintaining a relationship on and off the field

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Major League Baseball Franchises and Their Minor League Players, Maintaining a
Relationship on and off the Field

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

In today's professional arena, organized sports have grown to become institutionalized and highly organized through corporations in a multi-billion dollar industry. Through the use of in depth interviews completed online, this study investigated the role franchise communication plays in the development of nineteen minor league players' relationships within the Major League Baseball (MLB) sports industry. Results found that players feel their organizations disproportionately help some players achieve success over others and withhold information. As players, they felt they have a limited voice regarding the direction of their careers. Despite a difficult working environment, the players' desire to achieve success and perform at their best on a consistent basis remains strong. A majority of the players experience job satisfaction and feel motivated, but these factors were not related to their employer's organization.

Chapter One

Introduction

In today's professional sports arena, organized sports have grown to balance both its profit motivation and its public competitive entertainment persona. Through the use of organizational methods and sports theories, organizations have begun to build corporate empires that center around a few player employees who provide entertainment for the public. For these organizations, dissecting the behavior of each employee and formulating winning strategies can determine a team organization's public success or failure.

In an environment where sports are increasingly retaining business organizational strategies in their corporate plans, as scholars, we must be mindful of understanding the sporting atmosphere and understanding corporate management limitations in this environment. To help determine the success of organizational effectiveness, theorists have proposed that managers emphasize relationship building to help fulfill this objective. Researchers must realize that relationship theories developed in the business setting may not translate well in the athletic sports industry due to structural expectations, and performance differences. With team sports, the relationship between individual player traits and team performance is complex. There is an abundance of sports-related research across history, psychology, economic, marketing, and sociology disciplines. Despite the fact that sports have grown into highly organized corporations in a multi-billion dollar industry, few studies have focused on the internal communications between the players and the organization. A study of the relationship dynamics in a sports

organization might provide unique insight into player/employees and organizational communication on satisfaction and motivation.

In the interest of understanding and improving player labor relations, this study seeks to explore the development of employer-player/employee relationships within the Major League Baseball (MLB) sports industry by seeking answers to questions regarding MLB's use of communication to minor league players at the hand of scholars' suggestions of using relationship theory to build better employee/employer relations. Interests in researching this topic have to do with improving the relationships between the players and their organizations, and maximizing a person's playing potential. This research is designed to increase understanding of minor league baseball players' perceptions of the role communication plays in their relationship with their organization.

The following research introduces new aspects of minor league player perspectives, but also borrows heavily from past research in both public relations relationship and sports organization studies. Next, current minor league baseball players were questioned about the relationship they have with the MLB organization they currently work for. Public relations relationship theory was evaluated from the players' perspective.

This research uses participants from several baseball franchises to understand if the individual perspectives are developed from a unique organizational environment or a pervasive culture crossing individual organization boundaries. Researching several team organizations and not just one can investigate problems throughout the environment and highlight areas of improvement that all teams need to be aware of when internally auditing the strength of their relationships with minor league players.

Through this research, I hope to provide greater awareness of the need for improved relationships and communication between organizational teams and minor league baseball players. Possibly, this research will promote dialogue about communication systems within the MLB organizational structure and increase interest in a research area that previously has had little scholarly interest.

Importance of Relationships in Baseball

Successful teams not only have highly able and motivated players, but they also achieve synergies that other teams do not have. More specifically, successful teams ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Organizations, realizing the interdependence with their employees, develop different types of relationships, seek to minimize conflict, and maximize productivity. To do this, organizations solicit active support from proven systems in the environment. Many researchers emphasize that relationships help to reconcile goals between organizations and their constituents, therefore helping to advance the goals of the organization (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Ledingham & Brunig, 2000; Weintraub & Pinkleton, 2001).

In most industries it is difficult to determine the value of an employee and compare one employee against another. However, in baseball, every action a player performs is documented and factored into the employer's decision making process. Each player has a constant but unknown underlying level of performance. Changes in the player's performance level could result in significant organizational attention that could shape the course of the player's career.

Given the high amount of information employers have regarding the performance levels, actions, and behaviors of their employees, it would be in the employer's best interest to attempt to cultivate a positive relationship with their player employees to maximize performance levels. Research findings show managers who use communication as a strategic tool to build and maintain relationships help to reduce organizational conflicts and help to foster cooperation between an organization and its employees (Huang, 2001, p. 275).

Generally each employee has a perception of the quality of the organization within his or her environment-- a perception constructed by personal evaluations of elements of communication within the organization. The organization's perceived investment in the employee (Tsui, Pierce, Porter & Tripoli, 1997), and the patterns of how people communicate (Monge, Rothman, Eisenberg, Miller, & Kirstie, 1985), and the degree to which they perceive organizational communication to be supportive (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Tansky & Cohen 2001) all contribute to the overall working environment in an organization and help management understand the elements of organizational effectiveness.

Although baseball is a team game, many different individuals play this game and have different arousal/ anxiety levels and motivation strategies required for consistently high levels of performance. A common goal of both players and the organization is for the player to consistently demonstrate a high level of performance in game play through strong motivation. The way leaders promote and create high levels of group motivation can have a dramatic effect on the way a group performs (Turman, 2003). By examining the relationship between the organization and its players, one can begin to conclude what

adjustments an organization can make to maximize the player's potential. Examining organization motivation strategies and player motivation needs could highlight a weakness in organizational processes.

Management scholars have noted the association between effective organizations and the presence of good leaders and successfully functioning teams. In a study of baseball managers and their effectiveness regarding the ability to influence the individual player's performance and increase the probability of their team winning, Singell (1993) found that individual player performance improves when traded to "better trained" managers. Team performance was found to be improved through motivation of individual players, which can be affected by the way managers conduct practice, use players in game situations, or mediate disputes between players.

Managers are found to contribute significantly to the productivity of the organization and the performance of their subordinates in major league baseball. Singell's (1993) analysis indicates that a team that has a good versus average manager is likely to win several more games over a season, all else equal, which often is the difference between first and second place (p. 58). The organizational communication manager needs a theory that identifies when employees might develop cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors that may hurt or harm the organization, as well as a theory that tells him/her when and how to communicate with his/her employees. It is the communication managers who must help their organization adjust to and influence a complex environment of other organizations, priorities, activists, and constraints. Singell's research indicates that baseball managers are in a position to utilize communication and relationship tools to improve the players and maximize performance.

Several theories such as rhetoric theory, social exchange theory, and organizational information theory relating to communication styles and subsequent effects of employer and employee relationships have been developed and are in use today. These theories have been practically applied in numerous corporations and organizations, resulting in a strong history of literature that profiles situations in need of successfully or unsuccessfully implementing theoretical strategies.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

To some scholars, relationship management has become synonymous with public relations (Ledingham, 2000, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). The study of organizational relationships has become an important research topic in recent years (Broom, Casey, & Richey 1997, 2000; Huang 2001; Hung 2005; Hon & Grunig 1999; Ledingham & Bruning 2000). Scholarship includes definitions, dimensions, attitude studies, public-organization types, outcomes, and process models that all contribute to the theory that the relationships an organization builds and maintains with various publics will play an important role in the organization's success or failure.

Ledingham (2003) describes four developments that led to the emergence of framing public relations within the relational perspective. He states that first relationships came to be recognized as a central role within public relations. Within the notion of "managing" these relationships, public relations was re-conceptualized as a management function. Scholars went on to identify types and elements that contributed to relationships between organizations and publics. Finally, scholars developed models to accommodate relationship processes and outcomes (p. 182).

In reviewing the development of this topic, Broom, Casey and Richey (1997) explore the concept of relationships and note the absence of an operational definition in public relations theory. In an attempt to further relationship theory, Broom, Casey and Richey (1997) construct a concept of relationship tenets that includes distinct measurable

properties for future scholars. Following this, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) provide a definition of an organization-public relationship as “the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural, or political well being of the other” (p. 62). Later, Selnes and Sallis (2003) describe their vision of a relationship as a joint activity between two parties in which they share information, and that is jointly interpreted and integrated into a shared relationship. “Thus it is a process to improve future behavior in a relationship” (p. 80). They describe the process as routines that encode formal and informal procedures and scripts for how the parties have learned to do things. They also go on to note that an “important motivator for relationship learning is environmental uncertainty, which refers to the forces in the environment over which the parties in the relationship have little or no control” (p. 81).

Ledingham (2003) argues that relationship management has evolved into a comprehensive body of work and needs to become a general theory in public relations. Ledingham states that the relationship management perspective as a theory explains that the purpose and direction of an organization is affected by relationships with key publics in the organization’s environment. Relationship management theory balances the interests of organizations and publics through the management of organization-public relationships. He highlights that the theory “specifies measurable outcomes...providing practitioners with a framework for demonstrating the contribution of public relations initiatives to the economic, cultural, and social well being of an organization” (p. 191). Therefore, the desired outcomes of public relations practice are strong public relationships. This perspective holds that public relations initiatives should generate

understanding that benefits both organizations and publics. Ledingham (2003) also strongly argues for practitioners to realize the importance of the theory, stating that the relational theory “explains the mutual benefit that occurs when organization-public relationships are effectively managed” (p. 191). He explains that organization-public relationships involve an ongoing interchange of needs, expectations, and fulfillment. The outcome of effective relationship management is mutual understanding and benefit. This relationship state reflects mutual perceptions of needs and expectations of fulfillment. In return, mutual benefit strategies can generate economic, societal, and political gain for both organizations and publics. Grunig and Hon’s (1999) work also emphasizes the importance of the theory by stating:

the value of relationships can be determined by reduced costs of litigation, regulation, legislation, boycotts, or lost revenue that result from bad relationships. Relationships also help the organization by aligning with donors, consumers, shareholders, and legislation needed to support organizational goals. (p. 10)

Relationship Dimensions and Types

After conceptualizing organization-public relationships, researchers started proposing characteristics that represent qualities of the relationships. Based on the principle that there are many factors (dimensions) that affect relationships, scholars (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Grunig, 1999; Hung, 2005; Ledingham & Bruning, 2003; Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison & Lesko, 1997; Sriramesh, Grunig, & Dozier, 1996) have contributed to a body of research identifying individual dimensions that contribute to the process and outcomes of relationships.

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) attempt to identify ways relationships are initiated, developed, and maintained. Through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, they identified trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment as separate dimensions that all contribute to a good organization-public relationship. They explain:

Relationships flourish when there is a balance within the relationship; both parties feel the other party is investing time and themselves, both parties are willing to commit to the relationship; and both parties can be trusted to act in a relationship supportive manner. (p. 58)

Several scholars go on to identify relationship tenets or “dimensions” that contribute to a complete relationship. Scholars’ opinions differ among which qualities complete a relationship, as well as overlap in agreement regarding other qualities. For the purpose of this research, three of the most commonly cited dimensions (trust, commitment, and openness) will be used.

Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, and Lesko (1997) developed a list of 17 relationship dimensions: investment, commitment, trust, comfort with relational dialects, cooperation, mutual goals, interdependence/power imbalance, performance satisfaction, comparison level of alternatives, adaption, non-retrievable investment, shared technology, summative constructs, structural bonds, social bonds, intimacy, and passion. These variables were studied qualitatively to help determine organization-public relationships that impact consumer behavior. Their results found that “an organization-public relationship centered around building trust, demonstrating involvement, investment, commitment, and maintaining an open communication has value in that it impacts the stay-leave decision in a competitive environment” (p. 61). Consumers who

ranked an organization highly with regard to the specified five relationship dimensions (trust, involvement, investment, commitment, open communication) were more likely to use that organization's services when given a competitive choice. Ledingham et al. attempted to understand what dimensions contributed to well initiated, developed and maintained relationships and found that "to be effective and sustaining, relationships need to be seen as mutually beneficial, based on mutual interest between an organization and its significant publics"(p. 63).

Hon and Grunig (1999) contributed to relationship dimensions in their guideline for measuring relationships. They identified the following four relationship outcome indicators: control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Control mutuality (the ability of one side to influence the other) can also be seen as a condition in a relationship as well as an outcome of the relationship.

Researchers found that organizations, depending on how they want to interact with publics in their institutional environments, develop different types of relationships. An organization's behavior is likely to be influenced by the type of relationship it desires. In their guideline, Hon and Grunig (1999) identified communal relationships and exchange relationships as two types of relationships. Later, Hung (2005) studied mutual, communal, covenantal, contractual, symbiotic, manipulative, and exploitive relationships.

Below is an analysis of the three relationship dimensions (trust, openness, and commitment) that have historically been emphasized as keystones in relationship literature. The analysis is followed by a review of organizational culture, a term that will help in understanding how the three dimensions are prioritized and regarded in the context of the baseball setting. Finally, a thorough review of motivation and job

satisfaction will be used to understand how these relationship elements can influence the players. These terms have been explored from both the public relations and sports literature standpoint, to give greater understanding of how the dimensions can be manipulated within a sports setting.

Trust

Trust is a foundational characteristic that allows organizations to exist (Grunig & Huang, 2000). Because managers often serve as an intermediary between the players and team owners during sports personnel changes and contract negotiations, trust for employees on an interpersonal and organizational level in an MLB organization is essential to keep business on track.

In employee/ employer relationships, Grunig (1999) stated that trust is one of the most important aspects of relationship building: “to be most productive, employees must trust the organization for which they work” (p. 24). Trust can be defined as a party’s willingness to open itself to another. This would indicate that trust is a learned emotional skill. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined trust as “a feeling that those in a relationship can rely on each other. Dependability, forthrightness, and trustworthiness are key components” (p. 58). Research shows the importance of building an atmosphere of trust between the employer and employee (Hosmer, 1995; Ledingham and Bruning, 1998; McNight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998). Trust forms because of one’s disposition to trust. A breakdown in trust between employee and employer results in negative consequences on both sides.

Trust can be approached and defined from either the public's or the organization's viewpoint. Stacks and Watson (2007) defined trust as "a perception that the evaluation of the organization or public(s) is dependable" (p. 68). Ledingham and Bruning (1998) operationalized trust as holding organizational actions accountable: "an organization doing what it says it will do" (p. 58). Both definitions used trust as an element to judge the behavior of the relationship partner.

In a business context, it is important to understand levels of trust that develop due to the actions or behaviors of another party. Institution-based trust maintains that trust reflects the security one feels about a situation because of guarantees, safety nets, or other structures. Cognition-based trust maintains that trust relies on rapid cognitive cues or first impressions, as opposed to personal interactions. Seines and Sallis (2003) stated that "trust is the strongest governance mechanism in developing collaborative and effective relationships" (p. 82).

Cummings and Chervany (1998) noted that some trust theorists previously have believed trust develops gradually over time. By presuming that trust grows over time, theorists assume that trust levels start small and gradually increase. Cummings and Chervany also cited studies reflecting high-levels of initial trust when two parties began working together. Research shows a discrepancy between initial demonstration of high levels of trust and a notion that trust develops over time. This lack of clarity in the formation of trust, shows a weakness in understanding determinate formations of trust between parties.

Openness

Ledingham (2003) stated that openness is seen as “sharing the organization’s plans for the future with public members” (p. 185). From the baseball players’ standpoint, openness is a key factor in relationship building because players’ careers are dependant on the organization’s plans. Effectively managing the organizational resources of knowledge is an important challenge for organizations and their managers. To make knowledge available, it is crucial that individuals and departments become involved in the process of knowledge sharing. Employers and employees can improve their joint learning by facilitating information exchange, developing common learning arenas, and updating behavior accordingly. As stated by Messmer (2005), “while managers might not be able to share all of the details about business decisions or activities, they should strive to keep staff updated on critical matters...keeping your staff in the loop prevents rumors from starting” (p. 15).

Research concerning different factors influencing the degree and ways in which people share their knowledge has grown. Vries, Van den Hooff, and Ridder (2006) explain that emphasis has been placed on the relationships between team communication styles and job-related cognitions. Knowledge sharing is conceptualized in terms of two knowledge-sharing attitudes: eagerness to share and willingness to share knowledge. “Knowledge sharing is the process where individuals mutually exchange their knowledge and jointly create new knowledge” (p.116). This definition implies that every knowledge-sharing behavior consists of bringing or donating knowledge as well as getting or collecting knowledge. Both behaviors distinguished here are categorized as active

processes. People are either actively communicating to others what they know or actively consulting others to learn what they know.

Vries, Van den Hooff, and Ridder (2006) continue to explain that while both “willingness” and “eagerness” are attitudes that gear people toward knowledge sharing, there are some important differences. “Willingness” can be characterized as an orientation toward the group. It implies a positive attitude to other members of a group; a readiness to reply to colleagues kindly. Publics are willing to provide access to their personal knowledge, but because their focus is on the group’s interest, they expect others to behave similarly. They do not initiate actively sharing their knowledge easily if they are uncertain about whether others are also willing to contribute to the group’s interest by also donating and collecting knowledge. Alternatively, “eagerness” can be characterized as an orientation toward the subject about which knowledge can be shared. Whether other group members will also share their knowledge is not really relevant to them--it is the subject about which knowledge is being shared that triggers them. People are eager to let others know what they know because they themselves consider it valuable and expect others to appreciate their knowledge. It implies a positive attitude to actively show knowledge about a certain subject. Actors eager to share their knowledge will spout their knowledge, invited or uninvited (p. 117).

Pincus, Knipp and Rayfield (1990) discuss a communication climate within an organization. The communication climate is described as an individual’s filtering of various stimuli coming from the organization (p. 174). The organizational structure, individual responsibilities, reward/punishment, performance standards, warmth/ support, and organizational identity are all listed as characteristics of an organization’s

communication climate (p. 175). Contributors to an organizational communication climate are the quality and accuracy of downward communication, empathy with subordinates, quality and accuracy of upward communication, and information reliability (p. 176). Essentially, effective communication requires a free exchange of information.

In a study to understand the dynamics of openness in the workplace, Borowski (1998) asked: “Why do most employees try to deceive their bosses and why do most bosses try to exert extreme power over their employees?” (p. 1624). Borowski described an attitude where managers feel they are outsiders in the firm they work for. Managers “have no connection with employees and thus will act in ways to show their power in the workplace. It fosters a belief among employees that discussing anything with management will be a waste of time since it would basically be ‘over their heads’” (p. 1630). The development of this attitude due to a lack of communication and empathy is “often a source of tension for the workplace” (p. 1623).

One solution to close the gap between employees/ employers is the implementation of feedback. Feedback can promote job enrichment. When relevant information is provided in a timely fashion, workers are more likely to make needed adjustments to their performance. Frequent feedback makes it less likely that workers will be demoralized by realizing that their previous work efforts have been incorrect or that their work needs to be modified. This can also create connection between employers and employees that Borowski (1998) feels is lacking in the workplace.

Generally in sports, although field management is closest to and in the best position to evaluate player performances as successful or failing, the decisions are made by the front office management in the organization’s headquarters. Ball’s (1976) study of

individual cognitive processes for athletes failing in sport performances noted the high uncertainty and anxiety surrounding the office's decision making process concerning professional and/ or failing performances. Baseball players' job security is dependent on the decisions and evaluations made by the MLB team's front office staff. Players look for clues to the evaluated status of their performances. In the absence of concrete information regarding their perceived job security and performance, "Players employ 'baseball magic' as coping mechanisms; various rituals are followed, taboos avoided and fetishes guarded --all as strategies believed to provide added control over outcomes, and thus reductions in experienced anxiety" (p. 732).

Ball (1976) noted a pervasively understood, yet "unwritten" rule method regarding the thought processes of the invisible office staff: "That office management fails players for non-game performance reasons; length of hair, reputation for eccentricity and imputed attitude, are all commonly believed to be used as decisional criteria" (p. 733). As players read clues into the behavior of field management, they attempt to forecast the "orientations of office management, upon whom their own positions are dependent, so they may act in conformity with these imputed meanings" (p. 733). Ball's research regarding baseball players' attitudes reveals a weakness in communication openness between the team's office staff and the players.

Commitment

Commitment is the “the decision to continue a relationship” (Ledingham & Brunig, 1998, p. 58). Commitment “adds the responsibility by suggesting that successful relationships involve facing relational differences together” (p. 58). Lance (1991) explained that job satisfaction and employee commitment to the organization has been found to develop from “appraisals of more general aspects of the organization as a whole” (p. 141). Organizational dependability and looking after employee’s best interests were found to contribute to an employee’s organizational commitment.

Research of different employer-employee relationships finds that employees perform better, and express a higher commitment level when they work within an “overinvestment” or “mutual investment” relationship with their employer (Tsui, Pierce, Porter & Tripoli, 1997, p.1106). This research argues that employers who invest time, feedback, communication, and support in their employees equal to or greater than the employees have invested in their jobs will see a greater return in productivity and performance.

Ledingham et al. believes that employees judge the commitment of an organization by its committed welfare to its community. Under the assumption that a business views its employees as an asset, not an expense, commitment examines the degree to which both the employee and the organization believe the relationship is worth spending energy, resources and time to cultivate and promote.

Culture

Sriramesh, Grunig, and Dozier (1996) studied the concept of organizational culture. They used corporate culture to describe the nature of the communication system inside organizations and the external communication that organizations have with publics outside the organization-public relations. Once theorists recognized the strong effect of culture on organizational processes, including communication, they quickly began to ask whether organizational culture can be “managed.”

Corporate relationships are an important variable that may help explain the communication and relational activities of an organization. Researchers use the concept of organizational culture to explain why organizations have the type of communication systems they have. Scholars question that if relationships can be changed, then a subsequent change in culture might change the communication system to make the organization more effective. Changing an organization’s communications may be one way to change its culture.

Sriramesh, Grunig, and Dozier (1996) explained organizational culture “as the rules of the game for getting along in the organization, or as the ropes that a newcomer must learn in order to become an accepted member” (p. 232). Although many large organizations have formal orientation procedures to acclimate new employees to the organizational norms, acculturation takes place at other informal levels. They found corporate culture to be important variable that might help explain the communication and public relations activities of organizations.

Holladay and Coombs (1994) investigated the role that delivery of a message plays in the recipient’s determination of a leader’s charisma, especially as it pertains to

communicating an organizations' vision to employees. They found that differences in message delivery resulted in differences in perceptions of the leader's credibility and charisma among message recipients (p. 183).

In a study of workplace behavior, Fodchuk (2007) explains that it is the workplace environment and cultural perceptions of justice that create the behaviors of the employees and the relationships they develop with their organization. Fodchuk cites several aspects within a working environment that leads to counterproductive employee behavior. Counterproductive behavior is defined as "behavior leading to a loss in job efficacy" (p. 28). Examples cited are theft, violence against colleagues, gossiping, blaming co-workers, and submitting below par work performances (p.28).

Just as a workplace environment can create counterproductive behavior, it can also influence employees to go above and beyond their job requirements for their organization. Fodchuk (2007) explains antecedents to employee citizenship behaviors. Employee citizenship behaviors are defined as voluntary individual behavior that the organizations reward system does not directly recognize such as altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship and courtesy (p.29).

The concept of organizational culture has thoroughly been studied by Schein (1985). He believes that organizational culture manifests itself in behavioral cues and actions that are unwritten but followed by members of the organization. Schein believes that organizational cultures develop to help members cope with their environment:

A pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 9)

Schein (1985) attributes culture as a profound influence on situations and argues that our failure to take culture seriously in the corporate world stems from the abstractness of the more important concepts such as assumptions, norms and values. The failure of organizational leaders to seriously consider their own culture when implementing changes only leads them to marginal success for the organization (1996, p. 1). Schein's (1985) work describes the pervasive and unquestioned organizational realities discussed as assumptions, cultural norms, and values.

Assumptions are described as an unconscious awareness of truths that members believe to be their reality. They are typically taken for granted and are beneath ordinary awareness by organizational members. These unquestioned aspects of culture penetrate every part of cultural life and infiltrate everyday experiences. Cultural assumptions only become seen when an outsider spends time in a foreign culture and questions the behaviors and thought processes of the members.

Cultural assumptions encompass cultural values. According to Schein (1985), cultural values are social principals, goals, and standards that organizational members share. The cultural values define the members' concerns and cares by revealing the members' priorities. Values also define right from wrong in the culture and help make up a moral code for the organizational members.

While values specify what is important to organizational culture members, norms establish expectations for behaviors among one another. The unwritten rules that lead members of a cultural organization to act, behave, and guide their expectations are defined as norms. Norms define what is considered normal and abnormal. By creating a code of conduct by which an individual or group is expected to behave, norms are an

expression of values. Dress code, appropriate behaviors, such as being courteous of co-workers, and expected consequences such as disrespecting superiors are all examples of cultural norms.

Together assumptions, norms and values create an invisible world that is unique to the environment and followed unquestionably by its members. All the cultural factors mentioned in the previous paragraphs -- communication styles, unwritten rules, and leadership qualities-- contribute to the culture of an organization. Understanding the complexities and relationships of organizational culture helps to create an understanding of the player and organization actions within an environment. For this research, in an effort to understand various dimensions of MLB relationships, an understanding of the underlying culture will help this research explain its findings and help create realistic suggestions for positive changes to the relationship between MLB players and the organization.

Job Satisfaction

While research shows that bitterness and blame is likely to result when people are deprived of long term career jobs (Judge & Watanabe, 1994, p. 101), a predictable career progression with long and diligent service to one employer are luxuries that MLB employee -players' are unlikely to achieve. If players are likely to feel bitterness while employed with an MLB organization, why do they continue to pursue a baseball career?

People are attracted to sports at which they are reasonably good. Such behavior is consistent with organizational psychology research that has examined the association

between job satisfaction and job performance (McAllister & Michalik, 1995, p. 386). Work is an important part of people's lives. In reality, the employee is forced to compromise his or her ideal balance of work and leisure with the prevailing demands of the employer. This raises the question of balancing life outside of work. Providing benefits that outweigh the cost of maintaining a relationship where employees feel positively towards one another has been of interest to researchers.

Player employees of baseball organizations often find themselves on a new team or in a new organization from year to year due to trades, releases, and contract completions. McAllister and Michalik's (1995) study of employee mobility found that:

Mobility is not just the degree to which an attractive alternative position is available, but also the probability that the position will be accepted. For higher levels of mobility, an employee will be more likely to leave than to stay. When this occurs, the employee may begin to be seen as one of them rather than one of us. Past research has shown that a person can be seen as psychologically part of an out-group even though, nominally, that person is still part of the in-group. (p. 384)

McAllister and Michalik (1995) found that "the moderately mobile employees received greater rewards than the highly mobile employee or highly immobile employee; this effect held for employees of high and low competence" (p. 387). If their findings can be applied to baseball players, then it could be assumed that each player participates in his job function under various degrees of treatment depending on individual contract situations.

Judge and Watanabe (1994) proposed a compensation hypothesis that suggests "workers with dissatisfying jobs seek out more pleasurable experiences in their non-work lives" (p. 102). They go on to differentiate between a spillover model that may be appropriate for some individuals where one domain "spills over" into other domains

within a person's life. The compensation model (workers with dissatisfying jobs seek out pleasurable experiences in their non-work lives) is appropriate for some individuals, and the segmentation model (there is no relationship between job and life satisfaction) will accurately describe other employees. Results of their study suggest that for most individuals job and life satisfaction are positively related. The spillover model seems appropriately to characterize most individuals, while the compensation and segmentation models also characterize many.

Lance (1991) studied job satisfaction and found that in a competitive job market "attractive alternative employment opportunities have an effect on the organization" (p. 141). Employers are forced to compete for talent, and employee job satisfaction increases when employees feel they are in a job position that values them. Though Lance's study focused on voluntary turnover within an organization, in the baseball player's context, it is reasonable to question if the attractiveness of a currently held sports position would lead to "spillover" into other life domains, and if the attractive alternative employment opportunities provided by other teams competing for players would lead to increased job and life satisfaction when and if they are aware of their 'value' as a player.

Motivation

In sports, as well as modern society's business structure, a broad exploration of employee motivations can lead employers to structure their organizations in a fashion that efficiently could maximize employee potential. Psychologists express the performance and motivation relationship as $P=A*M$ where P is performance, A is ability, and M is

motivation (Chung, 1968, p. 64). Scholars have found a broad range of significant employee motivations and the environmental difference (business and sport) leads to a difference in employee motivations.

The discrepancy between a corporate employee and athletic player employee provides insight that employers need to tailor a motivational climate meant to enhance individual-level performance by examining an individual's goal orientation in the organizational work groups. Since there has been a motivational difference between players and corporate employees, employers need to be careful not to assume that corporate motivational packages will have similar effects on athletic player employees.

Dragoni's (2005) research on motivational theory focuses on the corporate employee's motivation to perform a specific task. Given the increasingly dynamic nature of work, she argues that an employer's understanding of how to enhance employees' motivation to learn has become critical. Given the implications for one's career, an individual's motivation to demonstrate competence is critical (p. 1084). Dragoni's research found that individuals display a performance orientation and tend to demonstrate their competence by making comparisons of their ability with others either to obtain favorable competence appraisals or to avoid negative judgments of their abilities (p. 1085). She created a model that focuses on learning, proving oneself, and avoiding failure. Dragoni finds that leadership and climate perceptions are likely precursors to state goal orientation. Also, the consistency of leaders' behavior in emphasizing a particular achievement goal over time and across group members leads to a pattern among the employees trying to also emphasize that particular achievement goal (p. 1085). Generally, certain achievements that are recognized by employers become achievement

goals of the employees. Therefore, it is the leader's responsibility to demonstrate the form of goal orientation for employees.

Potosky and Ramakrishna (2002) found a positive link between an employee's learning-goal orientation and overall job performance. A goal orientation is explained as "an individual's goal preference in an achievement setting" (p. 277), and a learning orientation refers to "the desire to master something new" (p. 277). They explain that individuals with a high learning goal orientation approach new tasks with the intention to develop skills and increase abilities. Comparatively, individuals with low learning goal orientations view their abilities as fixed and immobile.

In sports, a good understanding of an athlete's motivation is critical for an organization designing an appropriate motivational climate to realize an athlete's physical talent. Unlike the corporate world, motivation in mature athletes has been found to be a dispositional, stable, and a developed -self element. Mallett and Hanarahan (2004) asked the question, "What drives some athletes to achieve at the highest level while other athletes fail to achieve their physical potential?" (p. 183). They found that an athlete's "competence" (demonstration of a high ability in an achievement setting) and internal motivations (pursuit of being someone special and personal goals) are motivating forces within an athlete, rather than financial reward or winning.

Interestingly, Ball's (1976) study of baseball players focused on their fear of public failure in the sport as a motivation for success. Ball's interest focused on "the occurrence of failure in sport and reactions to it, and the social organization of sport" (p. 726). His explanation that teams are structured around their game generated positions and are essentially closed systems, consequently, there is no place for failures to go but out of

that system (p. 732). Due to the explicit set of rules within the game of baseball and the simple goal for the outcome of the game (to have the most points), Ball identified failure as a separation or unsuccessful pursuit from a goal specified position (p. 726).

Essentially, if an athlete fails to meet their specified goals, then they are discharged from their position.

Ball goes on to say, “For most players, careers are short and the possibility of failure is always upon them; it is one of the constantly problematic facets of their occupational lives that they may face being failed at any time” (p. 726). Failure and the fear of losing one’s position on the team is compounded by the “public-ness” of the job position and the timeliness of the failure. Baseball performances are public and a failure to perform is also public for the players. “Reactions are likely to be one of embarrassment, a sense of unfulfilled expectations. Deemed not to be normal, not ‘fitting in’” (p. 727).

Ball accepts that the player’s fear of public evaluation from peers, strangers, and organizational teammates and officials is a strong motivational incentive to perform at the height of one’s ability. Ball does not go on to research any deviation in motivation levels for different groups of publics watching the performance. Sports organizational theorists could benefit from the knowledge whether distinct groups such as “family,” “employers” or “press” publics influence a player’s motivational level.

Major League Baseball

MLB is a multi-million dollar industry with a complex organizational network that operates through over 30 franchise organizations, or teams (Ozanion & Badenhausen, 2006, p. 1) Many Americans are never exposed to the highly complex corporate structure and simply see the resulting games that are played at the highest level of performance.

Each individual MLB team is privately owned by one or many people. The day – to – day management of the teams takes place in a typical institutional setting with its levels of responsibility and departments. The administrative structure includes a media relations department and security and merchandising departments. The team also includes a general manager, a big league manager, a farm director, and an assistant farm director. In addition to these managers, six big-league and numerous minor level scouts report to various managers on the daily activities of the team’s players, international players, players who play on other teams, as well as players still competing on school teams. The teams also have individual team managers, coaching staff, strength and conditioning coaches, and certified athletics trainers.

The games America sees publicly televised each year are games that compete at the highest achievement level --the major leagues. However, MLB has set up a minor league system to help prepare players for the major leagues. Organized professional baseball is built upon a hierarchy of leagues. The major league at the top constitutes the upper caste. Several minor leagues beneath are classified into a categorized lower caste. These classifications systematically vary in salary, prestige, and player ability, and can be arranged into a traditional stratification pyramid with the high caste majors at the apex,

the high-minors at the top of the lower caste, and the low minors at the base. Throughout this system, minor league teams are owned outright, subsidized, and tied in terms of player flow as “farm clubs” to teams in the major league clubs. There are over 100 such teams in the United States, some in Canada, and the remainder in Mexico.

There are six levels of minor leagues that players advance through before appearing in the major leagues. The players are not required to compete at each level, and many skip some levels entirely. It is up to the farm director’s discretion to decide which team to send a player to, based on the player’s current statistics and the available spots on the team. The teams allow each level to compete against another franchise team during the season. Generally, a young player who is signed to a team out of school will enter minor league spring training and be sent to either the team’s “rookie ball” team or “short season” team. Then the player will progressively enter “Low A,” “High A,” and “Double A.” “Triple A” is the highest level of minor league baseball before debuting in the major leagues. Players expect to spend several years advancing through the minor leagues. These players are routinely moved from team to team depending on space availability, injuries, and performance levels (J. Wesley, personal communication, October 2008).

Each team is placed in a small suburban town where the franchising team either leases the stadium from the town or a stadium owner. Each minor league team competes for an entire season, attempting also to compete in a playoff series, set up exactly as the major league team is set up. The players on the roster may not remain the same throughout the season, but the team managers are attempting to show the head office their own managing and coaching skills by creating a winning team (J. Wesley, personal communication, October 2008).

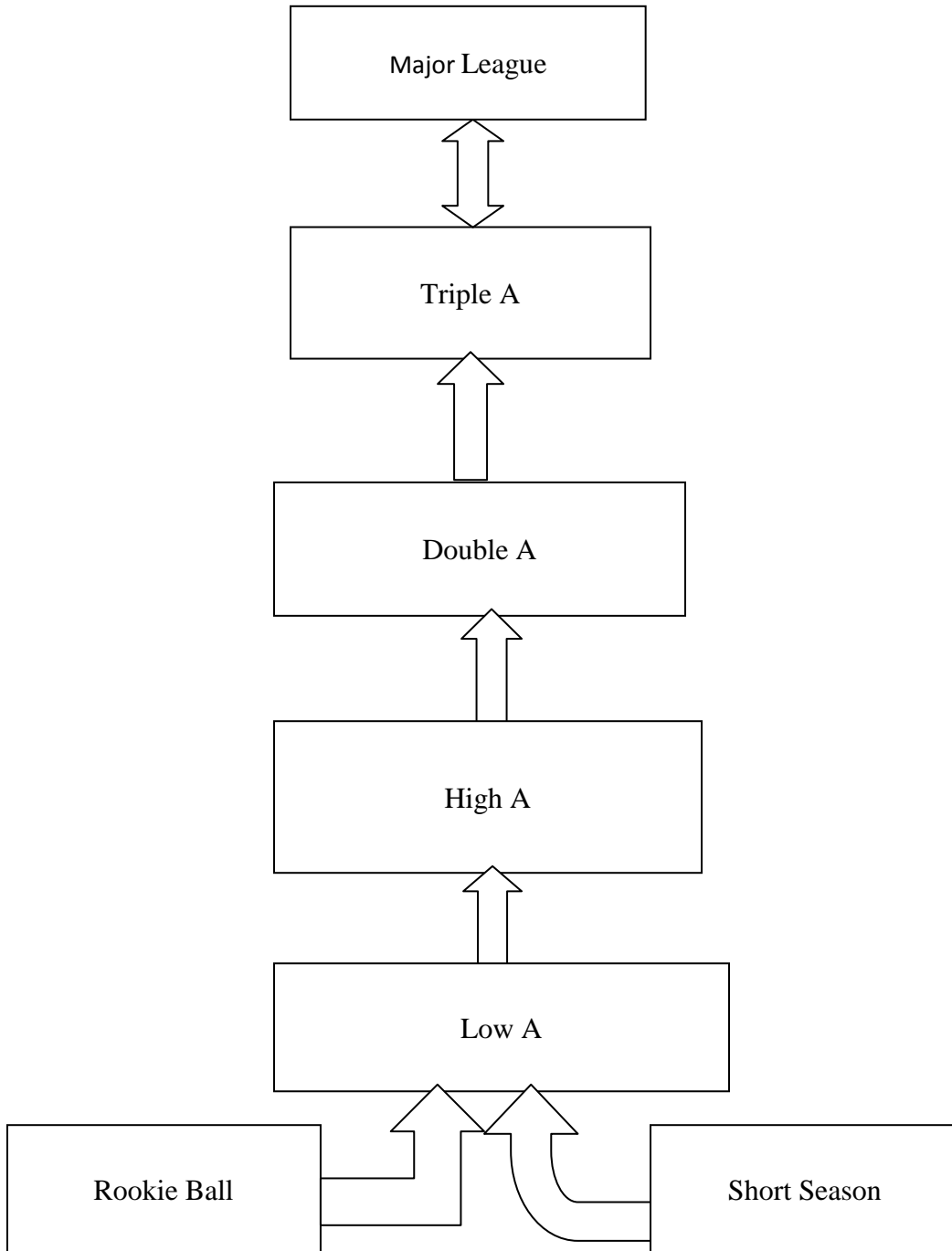


Table 1.1 A baseball player's typical advancement through the minor league levels

Players often view baseball team managers as a communication link to the organization's office staff. For the players, the managers are often the face of an organization, acting as an intermediary between the players, the team, and the front office (Singell, 1993, p. 50). The manager's daily presence and availability offer players a resource when they are seeking personal information regarding their career and organizational decisions. However, in reality, managers must be careful to maintain a balance between the organization's needs, the player's needs, and their own needs of job stability and advancement. The conflicting role of the manager leads one to wonder how the players' needs and requests are interpreted and handled.

Baseball managers, like other supervisors, are responsible for the team's performance. Managers directly affect team performance by their determination of how the individual players are used during a game. Duties include determining the players in the starting lineup, the pitching rotation, and other numerous game tactics. These decisions require an understanding of the game, an ability to monitor and assess player performance in a variety of situations, and knowledge of the opponent's strengths and weaknesses (Hakes & Sauer, 2004).

Managers often are given conflicting orders and priorities from the head office. Minor league managers compete for resources due to budget constraints and team marketing efforts. The overarching goals for the franchising team are to develop key players to the best of their ability, maintaining a winning (high revenue) minor league team, while constantly evaluating costs and maintaining a budget (Singell, 1993, p. 51). Franchises often dictate the amount of playing time allotted to specific players, and managers are responsible for creating winning game plans while also limiting some key

players' game appearances. In instances where a player comes to the manager requesting more playing time in order to advance in his own career, one wonders where the manager's loyalty lies. Is it with the player who sees him on a daily basis and respects him as a person responsible for career making decisions, or does he instead carry out the orders of the franchise, when they might go directly against the wishes of some of his players?

The minor league teams are dispersed throughout the country as well as Canada, so the need for communication, organization, and technology is great. The complexity of a franchising team makes it clear that the sports industry is fertile ground for testing theories, performing studies, and conducting research relating to issues of communication.

Contrary to the extreme precision, measurement, and data collection surrounding sports performance today, organizations often lack the degree of clarity of objectives, processes, and outcomes that sports are expected to exhibit. As sports have undergone a profound transformation over the past 50 years, business principles increasingly migrate into sports. Two of the more obvious changes have been acceleration in the trend toward professionalism and corporate sponsorship. Prior to the 1970s individual owners were thought to own teams for entertainment purposes. Baseball was regarded as a sport often referred to as "America's Pastime." Recently, professional ownership has been thought to be profit-motivated, and MLB now operates like many business enterprises. As part of the sport entertainment industry, MLB provides excellent examples of strategic marketing, brand management, customer service, and the impact of leadership qualities. All of these elements focus on the maximization of profits (Scully, 1989).

Under the assumption that sports teams are business enterprises, Schmidt and Berri (2006) studied the link between fan support, team performance, and profit maximization. They found that teams can no longer count on a predictably solid level of fan support. Fan loyalty is increasingly determined by the win/loss record of the team. Their study revealed, “An additional win is worth approximately 0.006 in team winning percentage, an additional win was worth just more than 57 additional fans per game in 1950. Across a season, the additional win would increase total attendance by 4,400. For the 1955-2000 periods, the win was worth 202 more fans per game, and almost 16,400 per season.” Consumer demand at the close of the 20th century is less about loyalty to “our team” and more about winning. Greater competition, labor management strife, free agency, and a general change in the focus of sports away from simple pastimes to one of profit maximizing business are possible explanations for the change in fans’ attitudes.

If a team is dependent on customers and fans to generate a profit, and fans are generated through a winning team performance, then it would be in the team’s best interest to encourage all avenues that could improve each player’s performance, leading to an overall better performing team.

While an abundance of research exists on the topic of professional sports, little has been directed towards identifying indicators of franchise organizational success or measuring the state of excellent relationships within the organizational unit. While Irwin, Zwick and Sutton (1999) argue that sports production, distribution, and consumption place unique demands upon marketing management and personnel (p. 604), much room remains for scholars to apply mainstream business and public relations theories to sport franchises.

This work aims to evaluate relationships as part of successful or “excellent” sport franchise management. Management realizes that marketing of sport organizations has become a critical factor in determining success or failure for the franchise (Irwin, Zwick & Sutton, 1999, p. 604).

Previous studies have focused on marketing factors affecting success. These studies have shown that while criteria such as win/loss records and attendance often are used to measure the success of sport franchises, the “use of single dimension or output orientated assessment processes such as these only foster the same inherent weaknesses as cited for corporations choosing to focus on sales volume and market share fluctuation”. While winning tends to stimulate demand due to the perceived quality of product and increased value of holding a ticket to an upcoming event, Irwin et al. (1999) recognized the potential of communication professionals to influence team performance and possibly help meet the team’s goals. They believe although a franchise is unable to control team performance, possibly personalized customer relations, marketing personnel and charting organizational strengths could influence attendance and ticket sales for a team.

There is little information on employer attempts to create relationships with specific franchise athletes. Studies have focused on major league athletes almost exclusively and have also only focused on performance records affecting team revenues and popularity. A good relationship and supportive behaviors between organizations and publics often correlate. If it is the goal of the team to have a player successfully navigate through the minor leagues, then it might be crucial for the organization first to have a relationship with its players to encourage performance success. Therefore, it would be in

the organization's best interest to monitor and promote relationships within the athletic environment.

Chapter Three

Method

There is no one simple research tool, technique, or methodology that will completely measure the relationship between an employee and his/her organization. Therefore, this research will use a combination of qualitative data analysis and interviews to better understand the relationship between the organization and its players from the players' opinions and perspectives. Grunig (1999) suggests that the qualitative method allows "the researcher to develop a better relationship with the research participant, which means the participant will provide a more candid assessment of the organization-public relationship." This method provides researchers with the ability to evaluate selected topics in depth and detail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is best used for exploratory or descriptive research that tries to uncover and understand what lies within the complexity of a phenomenon or system by conveying the interaction of context, setting, and participants' frames of reference (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Qualitative studies are especially suited for purposive sampling in that researchers are able to select information-rich cases that create a comprehensive and detailed account of the relationship from the subject's experience (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991).

Participants in this study came from a small number of MLB franchises. The players came from a total of five different franchises for a total of 20 players. These participants were chosen using snowball sampling. I personally know several players on different

teams and asked them to participate. These participants were then asked to provide contact information for other team members who might be willing to participate in the study.

My personal connection to a current minor league player makes me an insider and an outsider to the players. I am an insider as a friendly face that many of the players interviewed have seen and met on an ongoing friendship basis over the past several years. I am an outsider because I am not a player in an organization and I am a woman. Therefore, some of the knowledge for this research was acquired from personal understandings of the minor league process, while the majority of it was learned knowledge from participating minor league players. It is important to note that I was able to infiltrate this environment and gain the trust from the players due to my previous history with many of the players.

In-Depth Interviews

Rubin and Rubin (2005) described qualitative interviewing as “conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended conversation” (p. 4). Holstein and Gubrium (1995) argue that 90% of social science research uses some type of interview, making it the most widely used data collection instrument of the social sciences. The interview is designed to lend a first person perspective of the situation being investigated.

The flexibility of this method allows the researcher to adjust according to emerging concerns and needs. Therefore, data are not constrained by predetermined categories, and

researchers are able to explore the depth and relationships of the topics selected. Through qualitative interviews, researchers are able to understand experiences and rebuild events although they did not participate in them. Interviews explore how and why an event happened, allowing researchers the opportunity to observe the relationship of an issue under study. Each individual is expected to have a unique perspective and respond differently to the questions. This study's purpose of understanding relationships between MLB players and their employers supports the choice of using interviews.

Interviewing is also considered "one of the most expensive forms of survey research" (Chen & Hinton, 1999). The costs of travel, equipment, and time required to conduct each interview and transcribe notes all contribute to the associated costs of an interview. The combination of costs along with other limitations such as sampling reach and obtaining honest and thoughtful responses led this research method to be adapted into interviews that were conducted online.

Online Interviews

The interviews were conducted online through the use of Myspace Instant messenger. Myspace Instant Messenger® is a free Myspace based program that anyone with internet access and a Myspace account can download and transfer messages with other users. The program allows for a virtual conversation between the interviewer and interviewee to take place with minimal time delay approaching "real time" face- to- face interaction.

On-line interviewing is a relatively recent method that has been met with positive critiques. “Recognizing the power of the Internet to connect people, regardless of place or time, we explore the notion of a virtual form of ethnography, suggesting online, textual interactive interviews are worthy of research consideration” (Crichton & Kinash, 2003). Academically, online interviewing has been evaluated to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the interview results (Crichton & Kinash, 2003; Mann & Stewart, 2000). Crichton and Kinash (2003) concluded they “were able to sustain conversations beyond the scope of many traditional face-to-face interview sessions, noting that the participants enjoyed the process and often found it hard to quit their interactions with us” (p. 30). It has been found that this electronic method of collecting information enables the researcher to overcome a number of obstacles for completing the study.

Online interviews allows for a “world wide” reach. Online qualitative interviews can be conducted across geographical boundaries, allowing interviews to take place in multiple states or countries. All the participants in this study are living within the United States.

Mann and Stewart (2000) discuss the online interviewing technique as a method to obtain “resistance accounts” (p. 181), information that is risky for a person to dispense due to their vulnerability if by exposing sensitive information. Mann and Stewart explain that resistance accounts are easier to obtain through online discussions due to a perceived anonymity between the researcher and interviewee. The baseball players who were interviewed were placed in a vulnerable position because they were asked to discuss their experiences regarding the organization that employs them. Due to the sensitive nature of

these accounts, remaining anonymous could help lead to an honest and comfortable environment.

When interviews take place online, the participants are given ample time to reflect and give thoughtful responses to the questions being asked. The computer format allows the participants to edit their answers and produce in-depth, well thought out responses. This study aims to understand the organization from the player's perception. As a result these players were asked questions about concepts that they rarely have been asked in an interview pertaining to baseball. It was, therefore, important that they were able to think about the question and give honest answers.

Online interviews are also being praised for their convenience to both the researcher as well as the interviewee (Chen & Hinton, 1999; Mann & Stewart, 2000). Once the correct software has been downloaded, the interviews can take place from the home. The interviews are inexpensive because they do not require travel time and for the participant they will be performed in a familiar and comfortable environment. The researcher is able to save the transcriptions directly to computer files, therefore using the time saved to complete more interviews.

Design

The study used a total of 19 male players from five different teams. All minor league levels except short season were included in the study. The participants' age ranges from 21 to 29 years old, and the nationalities included are all citizens of the United States. All the players speak and understand English fluently.

The participants were selected using snowball sampling. The researcher's personal contacts were used, and each source was able to provide contact information for other teammates and friends who also play baseball in the minor leagues.

The players were contacted during the month of January. This is during the official "off season" of the baseball calendar year. January is also two months after the free agent players signed contracts either to remain playing with their former team or join another team. January is one month before the players leave their residences to start spring training with their respective teams. It was also chosen for the amount of free time players had to devote to the interviews before the busy baseball season started.

The players were contacted either online or through the telephone. The researcher introduced herself and briefly explained the study, concluding with assurances for anonymity. After the player expressed interest in participating, the study design was explained in depth to determine that the participant was able to use the software required and could access a computer. After those two criteria were met, a time was set up to perform the interview. Signed consent forms were obtained electronically before each interview.

Analysis

Grunig (1999), has developed a quantitative questionnaire that focuses on the four relationship elements being studied. The questionnaire employs a series of agree/disagree statements that pertain to the relationship variables. These questions were used as a guideline to determine the players' perceptions. Grunig already differentiated what

questions are appropriate for measuring certain relationship elements. An example question for measuring “trust” is “whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned with people like me”

In addition to his quantitative study, Grunig (1999) also developed a series of questions that measure the relationship elements qualitatively. These questions were used in the interviews, following Grunig’s suggestions that the interviews begin with general “grand tour questions” and later probe the participants about their perceptions of the individual dimensions of the relationship. An example of a “grand tour” question is “Would you begin by telling me what are the first things that come to your mind when you hear the name of (organization)?” For this study, all of Grunig’s suggested questions were considered and used when appropriate during the interview process.

Research topics

This study addressed several areas and topics that were explored. The players’ perceptions of trust, openness and commitment to their organization were discussed in depth, as well as the players reported perceptions of additional elements of job satisfaction and motivation. Answers provided by the players were also scrutinized for cultural contexts. Questions were asked to uncover how the dimensions exist and influence one another in the context of relationship management theory.

Chapter Four

Results

This study was designed to find out how minor league baseball players perceive three aspects of their relationships with their employer organizations: openness, commitment, and trust. In addition, questions were asked regarding their job satisfaction and motivation. Most participants described the nature of their relationships as weak or unsubstantial. They believe not only that they are alone in trying to advance in their careers, but also that the organizational communication system does nothing to increase their motivation, job satisfaction, or job performance. As one participant put it, the minor league system has been described as “a jungle” because you “need to fight and claw just to survive.” Below is an in-depth analysis of the participant’s answers.

Openness

The Players’ first impression’s of their organization

The players who have worked for more than one organization cited organizational cultural differences between the teams. “Some have more communication than others. Some seemed to care about you; others, they really don’t. Some care about the character of their players, want Christian boys. Another one is known for having guys who are kind of trouble.” Another difference cited was organizational expectations and priorities. “One was very organized as far as being fit and healthy. They’re adamant

about you being fit and working out for spring training. I mean everybody is, but they are more so than any other team (that this player has worked for).”

Although the participants feel that there are differences between baseball franchise organizations, the organizations themselves do not communicate potential differences to incoming players. Instead, the players often learn about their new employer’s priorities, expectations, and structure through communicating with other players, or the players “learn as they go.”

The players who have played for multiple organizations were asked about their first communicative contact with their new organization and later asked how they initially learned about their new employer. Only one of the participants has been contacted by his new organization to discuss goals, priorities, or expectations before the season began. He said that the initial three phone calls he received by an organizational representative, pitching coordinator, and strength coach impressed him. The phone calls consisted of welcoming him to the team, reviewing expectations, asking for his input regarding flight schedules, and explaining what his role will be when he reports to the new team. The calls were a surprise to him because he had not received similar calls from his former organization. He said that in comparison, he preferred the communication rather than his former organization where there were no welcoming phone calls to explain expectations. He believed that the new organization “seems more organized.” This participant is in a transition between his new and old organization at the time of this research, so he was unable to comment if the team continues its open communication once the season begins.

None of the other players who have worked for multiple teams had received welcoming phone calls from their new organizations explaining organizational roles, and

expectations or asking for player input. Information regarding report dates, workout schedules, and contact information was mailed to them in a generic mass communicative format.

When these players were asked how they learned about their new organization, all of them cited that they either learned about the organization as they played or contacted a current or former player for organizational information. “You just go out there and play. You listen. Some of the younger guys don’t really pay attention, and they can get overwhelmed. And if I have a friend who played for a team he will call me and tell me what its like.”

No one really knows what is going on

When the participants were asked about the communication system throughout their organization, the players were aware of the chain of command and tried to explain who is privy to information from the head office. When one player was asked to explain the communication process in the minor leagues, he stated, “The gaps start from the top down. Coaches don't know what is going on half of the time just like the players. The coordinators don't fill the coaches in, and then the coaches have nothing to tell the players.”

Additionally, information regarding a player’s standings within the organization or plans and decisions made regarding a player’s career are not expressly communicated from the organization to the player. “I don’t know what the organization wants with me or even with other players. I have talent and things to offer in baseball, but it doesn’t

appear to be what they are looking for, but I can't say for sure because I have no idea what they want.”

Many of the players describe a situation in which no one knows plans or decisions regarding player development, and information is circulated through a gossip mill. “Overall, I feel that the communication is very bad. We hear nothing from the coaches or coordinators in spring training or during the season. All we hear is rumors.”

Many of the players cited examples of learning about career decisions from other players, before they were officially told the information. “So the head guy didn't tell me [about the possibility this player would be starting the previous season at a certain level], but one of the managers told another player, and he told me, but it didn't happen.” In this case, and often, the information ended up being incorrect, but the players do not hold the incorrect information against one another, they view the gossip exchange as a way to look out for each other. Players rely on the rumor mill heavily because when information is officially released to them, the player is given substantial news, such as moving to a new city to play on a new team, and is required to act quickly. Often the player is given just a few hours to pack up his belongings before a bus takes him to the airport.

In the interviews, several of the players said that no one knows plans or decisions being made. And these players truly mean *no one*. The coaches and managers who interact with the players on a daily basis are seen as friendly people, but they are viewed as useless for learning information because they themselves do not have the information to give. “I have learned that no one really knows what is going on besides the minor league coordinator.” This participant went on to explain that he simply plays his

best everyday and hopes that the front office will move him up. When another participant was asked who he turns to for organizational information, the player admitted there is no concrete reliable source for him. “There are a few people in the organization I trust enough to talk to, but even they don’t know much about what is going on.” Additionally, another participant said that the previous season he was told by his coach on a weekly basis that he was going to be called up to the major leagues. “He just kept saying I was going to the big leagues. And when the season ended with no call up, he just said ‘I don’t know what happened.’”

When one participant was asked what he would do to improve communication in the minor league structure, he replied, “there should be more communication between the general manager of the entire organization and the coaching staff because sometimes they (the coaches) don’t even know what’s going on.”

Interviewer: “What about communication with the players?”

This player responded by saying, “There are too many guys. It would be too hard.” He seems to believe that an increase in communication with the players would either overwhelm the minor league structure or be too great a burden on franchise staff to be taken seriously.

Alternatively, other players believed that coaches and managers are privy to information but will not share the information with players. “If I asked questions, it seems like they wouldn’t say much” and “I don’t ask questions; I just do my job” were two answers provided when asked to explain how organizational information was obtained. “I could have asked the minor league coordinator, but there were three of them [during his time with the organization], and I never established a good relationship with

any of them.” Additionally, when the players were asked if they ever had felt misled by the organization, a majority of the players felt that they had not been misled because they have never been told anything to begin with.

Just one player believed that the daily staff he interacts with shares information openly and honestly. This participant’s attitude was that everyone is working towards a common goal, to advance every player to the big leagues. “The people that make you believe (that you will advance in baseball) is the coaches and managers who see you play every day. They will let you know if you are wasting your time or if you will have a chance.” When asked if these people make information about him available as they hear it, he responded, “Me personally, I do not talk with them that much. I let them do their job and I do mine.”

Of the organizational staff, who do you turn to for information?

In an environment where the players’ careers are dependent on unknown performance factors and the organization itself is a distance away from its players, the question was asked, “Who do you rely on for honest information?” One player said, “Personally I do not talk with them that much.” Another player said, “One of three coaches in the whole organization who I trust will give me a straight answer.” One player said he “firmly believed two coaches were in his corner...but now they are both coaching in the major leagues.” However, this player also trusted his team manager because he has “been playing for him for two years.” The nature of the minor leagues

encourages players to advance through the levels and leaves the players with very little time to develop trust and communication with staff members.

As discussed previously, one player said he believed the coordinators have the information to provide, but since he has not “established a relationship with any of them,” he does not turn to anyone in the organization for honest information. Several other players cited coaches as a source of honest information “if they know anything themselves.”

When one veteran player was asked how he learned about organizational movements regarding his career, he responded:

Your agent is supposed to tell you. And even then you don't find out till it actually happens. I've heard of guys who look on sports center and see that they were traded, and about four hours later they will get a call from the organization saying they got traded. They don't tell you, “Hey this is what's going on”.

It would be nice to know where I stand in their eyes every once in a while

The information the trusted sources provide ranges from clear to ambiguous. One player explained that since the coaches don't make any decisions regarding the players, the coaches will provide dubious information. “For the most part if the person knows something he will tell me, but in a vague response, because that is how they are told or are deciphering it themselves based on coaches' meetings.” Another veteran player responded that the people in the organization “will often give me enough information to figure it out on my own.” He then proceeded to recount an example of a

time when the organization made decisions with no communication to him: “Though they never told me I was gonna get traded.”

When asked why an organization fails to go over a specific plan with the players individually, the players perceive it as an unimportant task to the organization. “You know, I wish they would tell you what they are looking for. What you need to accomplish, or what their plans are. But it doesn’t work that way. That’s what I would change if I were put in charge.” Another player views the lack of communication as a lot of work for the organization and not worthwhile. “There are 135 guys. That would take about a month and a half. I think the guys who are the top 20 guys, then they [the organization] will take the time.”

Understanding what it takes to advance your career

Participants talked about the premise of playing well enough to “force the organization to move them up.” These players understand that career advancements are created through their performance. The organizations are looking for high performing players and will move these players to a more competitive level as a reward for the job performance.

The player’s goal during the season is to “force the organization to move them up.” If a player “puts up good numbers, the numbers will speak for themselves.” This seems to be a common understanding among all the players. However, when pressed about “what numbers are needed to move up,” the players turned vague. It seems the players do not know what numbers the organization needs to see before a movement is made. It is commonly known among baseball players that a hitter needs to bat as close to

1.000 as possible, and in reality an average of .300 is considered a well performing average. A pitcher needs his numbers to be as close to 0.00 as possible, with an average below 3.00 as generally accepted as respectable. However, each organization seems to have its own level of acceptable numbers. So when questioned if the organization looks for the players to meet predetermined goals or personal bests, the players were unable to answer clearly. "I have heard of only one organization in which they tell each player their role and what is going on with them. My organization maybe tells their bonus babies once in a while their situation but rarely on a consistent basis." A second player also explained the confusion over organizational goals: "No one ever tells you what exactly needs to be done to advance. You just have to play well and keep playing well and hope that they need you at the next level. Some guys will be having great years and never get moved, and no one knows why." Other players offered situations where advancements are made for poor performing players, while high performing players are not rewarded for their performances. Below is an analysis of this common situation.

They never give you a chance unless you are a prospect, it seems

Throughout the conversations, the term "prospect" was used frequently. A prospect is a player who has been identified by the organization as likely to advance into the Major Leagues. Prospects are named early in a person's career, often before they have entered the minor league system. It is possible for a player to become a prospect after a spectacular season, and it is possible for a player to be considered a prospect by one organization, but a regular player by another organization. According to the players,

prospects are “protected” by the organization and given opportunities that other players are denied.

There are varying degrees of bitterness among the players regarding the path of the prospect. In a majority of the interviews, questions about prospects were never even broached; it was the players who steered the conversation into the differences in the experiences between prospects and “regular players.” It seems that when explaining how the minor league system works, there is a vastly different experience perceived between the two types of players.

When asked what prospects are given differently than regular players, every interview offered a multitude of examples such as “big signing bonus,” “they get more money,” “they are moved up quicker,” “they are given extra time to come back from an injury,” “they have more communication with the organization,” and “they are planned for.” (This final statement refers to the idea that an organization actively *plans* for the moment these prospect players will enter the major leagues, and the organization opens up spots on teams at each advancing level to prepare the player in a scheduled manner.)

One veteran player who has been considered a prospect throughout his career explains his observations:

There is a shorter leash, and there is a longer leash. They [the organization] let the longer leashes kind of do whatever. They kind of pamper them. This [viewpoint] is from other players, not myself. I’ve treated myself like every other player. I worked my butt off. I did everything I needed to do and more. But some guys, they don’t do anything and they think that they’re Jesus Christ.

Interviewer: “They expect the team to help them along?”

They abuse their privileges, and there is no disciplinary action. It’s really a slap on the wrist. Other players, say who got drafted in the 50th or 40th round, and say

he does something, very little, and they'll blow it up. And the big player, they'll just take him in the office and go like, "Don't do that again."

Another player echoes this line of thinking by explaining that rules and boundaries within the minor league organization change according to which player is breaking the rules. He goes on to highlight a mindset where being a prospect may actually hurt a player's opportunity for advancing to the major leagues rather than help him:

If a guy got \$600,000 to sign out of high school and is eighteen years old, and he keeps screwing up and doing stuff off the field, and showing up late and not dressing right and not playing hard, they're gonna give him four or five years to figure it out. If you're a twenty-two year old senior out of college who signed for \$1200.00 and you trip up, or you do something, it's automatic, you're done. So you've got to know where you stand...They [the prospects] see it as "Okay, I've got two or three years where I can do whatever I want." Instead of "I'm gonna work my butt off and get into the big leagues as a twenty- two year old."

A veteran player with a history of six years in the minor leagues took a philosophical approach to the prospects. "I don't think anyone is guaranteed anything. I think some have more opportunity. It is just a different road there [to the major leagues]. Everyone has the same chance." However, when initially asked about prospects, this player admitted that he wished he were "a protected player who they [the organization] wanted you to advance."

Interestingly, although the players recognize an inherent difference in equitable treatment among the players and prospects, when prospects were interviewed, they did not consider (or admit at least) themselves a prospect. These people were identified by other players as a prospect to the interviewer, or they were drafted in high money rounds, indicating they were considered a prospect at the time they were drafted. When one prospect player was interviewed, he expressed doubt that the organization was committed

to him and stated that he believes the organization “only allows the prospects to succeed.”

“Regular” players identify a prospect according to three factors: the player was given a large signing bonus and drafted within the first 10 rounds, the player was considered by others to be moved up a level although his numbers did not reflect the reward earned, or the player has been observed to receive special treatment by the organization.

According to one prospect player, it is possible to bridge the gap between “prospects” and “regular players” in regards to receiving administration information equally. When asked if the organization communicates between prospects and other players differently regarding a players’ standing within the organization, he responded that some players who have been with the organization for a number of years will become a “home grown” player. A “home grown” player is a trusted and familiar face for the staff in a sea of new players every year and is on a familiar basis with the coaches and personnel who interact regularly with the players. “Well, I guess I’ve noticed that the free agents don’t get talked to as much. But the home grown people who were drafted and have been in the system for a little bit, they [the organization] usually communicate with them same as a first rounder or a 40th rounder. The communication is the same.” [Free agents are players who have a contract to play for an organization for only one season. At the end of the season, the organizations and players either renegotiate new contracts, or the player is free to leave and sign a contract to play for a new organization.]

Interviewer: “So there is less of a communication divide between the players who have been around a few years and prospects?”

He responded that it is possible to decrease the gap between prospects and home grown players who are receiving informational communication, but there is still a great divide regarding job security. “I was talking about like, report dates and stuff. But I guess for as far as where you stand, well, it’s kind of known when you’re a high pick, you don’t need to worry.” “Prospects,” and the special treatment these players are given, is a situation cited for players advancing without having numbers that “force an organization to move them up”.

You can make yourself one of them if you have all the elements they are looking for

Two players discussed “qualities” or “elements” that organizations look for in a baseball player and use as criteria when making judgments about the player’s potential. Both players believed that players who possess these “elements” do not necessarily need “good numbers,” because these qualities are enough to create a good baseball player, and poor numbers will be overlooked, while the organization does what it can to improve the player.

The qualities were listed as “size, speed, and strength.” It was difficult to determine if these players are “prospects” because it seems that these qualities are sometimes introduced during one’s career, and the possession of these qualities is perceived to turn a player into a prospect. Possession of these elements was cited as another reason that some players advance without “putting up good numbers.” One player recounted his experience when he entered the minor league system as a regular player but displayed elements that turned him into a potential prospect:

I remember my first year I almost triple crowned the league and I opened some eyes. I was a senior sign, and I went to mini camp and everything was cool. I showed up, and they said “you’re starting 2nd base in (X city)” and stuff. I went out my first month, I was hitting .310. Then I sprained my ankle. I dropped to hitting about .230 on the year. Next spring training I don’t get to go to mini camp. I show up March 7th. I’m like, “Hey how’s it going, what am I doing this year?” And they say “We don’t know. We don’t know if you’re going to extended... We don’t know.” I’m like, “Extended?”

(*Extended* refers to extended spring training. This is a holding place for players that the organization is unsure about keeping, trading, or releasing. Sometimes players are also sent to *extended* to finish recovering from an injury.)

This story exemplifies this player’s experience of proving himself to be prospect material, and then slipping back into his marginal position once he was injured. While he was enjoying a successful time as an unrecognized “prospect,” he was singled out by the organization and given specific details of plans for him. Once his numbers dropped, and he was playing as a “regular” player, he found himself in the dark concerning his job and his future.

In a system where advancement is the ultimate goal for both the players and the organization, it seems that there is no clear goal laid out for the players to strive for. There is no “magic number” for players to work for, and there is no particular accomplishment needed to advance to the next level. Each player is introduced to the minor leagues with the understanding that he must play to the best of his ability each day, in the hopes that the organization he plays for will advance him as a reward. However, there is no one, no manager, coach, or teammate with the ability to explain to this player what exactly needs to be accomplished to advance. To complicate the process further, the players believe that they are being judged according to unknown standards but that there

are special chosen teammates who compete on a different set of standards. The players are placed on a team of competition; players compete against each other for an opportunity to advance, but intuition and observation have taught them that the playing field is unbalanced and unequal.

Commitment

I just want to be with a team that wants me

When players were asked if they are loyal to their organizations, the answers were mixed. The younger inexperienced players do feel loyalty; whereas, the older players often do not. The players who do feel loyalty have only played for their current organization. Of the players expressing loyalty, one of them appears to be in a transition process where he is currently losing his loyalty, and another feels loyalty to a team he is no longer affiliated with.

The players who express loyalty to their organizations are all playing baseball on their original team. Except one, they all have played minor league baseball for three or fewer years. The player who is currently examining the loyalty he feels, first expressed that he is loyal, but then offered further statements that questioned that loyalty.

The player explained he is loyal because “it would be sweet to come up (to the major leagues) with the team that drafts you, and you help them win.” But his next statement, “but all my friends were here; now I just want to be with a team that wants me,” shows that he might be unsure about the intentions and integrity of his current organization.

Most of the participants who have played for more than one organization state that they feel no loyalty to their teams. “There is no loyalty in baseball or any sport right now,” said one player. When asked if the organization is loyal to him, or what the organization can do to increase his loyalty, he responded that the organization has no loyalty to him, either. “It is what they can get from you or what can you do for them.”

Due to the minor league setup, where players interact daily with some personnel but know that decisions are being made in an unseen front office, a question was asked regarding a player’s loyalty to “specific people in the organization.” When questioned whether the players differentiate between the unseen head office organization and everyday interactive staff, there is no discrepancy. All employees are seen as a piece of the organization, and there is no loyalty to coaches, coordinators, or head office staff personnel.

One player cited an organization’s lack of employee loyalty as justification for his lack of loyalty. “You know the coaches and staff just get one year contracts. So they can be gone at any time. Imagine working for an organization for 10 or 11 years, and they just give you a one year contract. There’s no job security. That’s not right.”

It’s been several years since one participant played baseball with the team that offered him a chance to play in the major leagues, yet he still feels loyalty to that particular team. He has not played for this organization in several seasons and has since become affiliated with many other organizations, but he cites a loyalty to the first team who brought him into the majors. “I think you always feel loyalty to the team that gave you your first chance in the major leagues.” When he was asked if he still feels a loyalty to any of the many teams he has played baseball for, he answers, “Well, team (X). I think

you always feel loyalty to the team that gave you your first chance in the major leagues. I always want them to do well because they gave me my chance. But other than them, no.”

One prospect player stated that he is loyal to every organization he plays for.

This player has had a long and successful career playing for two organizations.

Your competitiveness, your heart. When you change a team, your heart's with the new team. You still have friends, but you move on and represent the team that you're with. You try to be a chameleon. The truth is you never know what's going to happen. You go out there, you show up every day, and you have that loyalty and faith.

A common response by the players was explaining the importance of finding a team “that wants me.” Several participants said that if they could match up with a team that wants them (believes that the players possess major league abilities and creates opportunities for the player to advance), then the player believes that both his and the organizations goals will be attained. “I will be loyal to a team as long as they want me,” was the response from one participant. The veteran player clarified this meant that as long as a team kept moving the player up when he deserved it, and he didn't feel as if he would have better opportunities at another organization, then he would be loyal.

No one tells you you're done, they just release you

Although there are a few baseball players who continue to play the game into their 40s, a majority of players end their careers in their late 20s. Injuries, family obligations, and other opportunities are all reasons why a player might choose to “retire” from baseball. However, “getting released” from a team is the term used when an organization fires a player. Essentially he is “released” from his contract with the team.

Organizations often release players due to injuries, age, or a failure to live up to the organizations' expectations. When a player is injured, the organization is responsible for treating the injury and rehabilitating the player to "get back to playing shape." Players returning from injuries do not always recover fully, and often organizations decide that the man is no longer a viable player.

Professional baseball is a younger man's game, and as a player celebrates each birthday, he knows that the day approaches when he will be replaced by a younger and faster player. If a player has not established himself by his late 20s, he risks being released by his organization.

"Being released" often comes unexpectedly for these players. Of the players interviewed, only two of them had been released by an organization. This number reflects that only a limited number of players are capable of being released by one organization and signed to a new contract to play baseball with another organization. Both players interviewed were released by their organizations unexpectedly.

One of the players has been released by several team organizations and says that it depends on the organization if it tells the player the honest reason why he has been released. "Some did [honestly explain to the player why he was released]. Some didn't. It was a numbers game. Sometimes they would just tell you something to make you happy. So you wouldn't cause any trouble."

The second player who was released from a team offered a detailed account of the experience. He explained that he believes the release came from the front office because he feels that he is a hard worker with a good attitude who got along with and was

respected by the coaches. Therefore, he doesn't believe that it was the coach's decision to let him go. He expressed this sentiment in the following way:

I was coming back from elbow surgery. I guess I didn't recuperate fast enough though. I was walking into the building during spring [training], and one of the coaches met me in the parking lot. He told me that the office is releasing me, and that I'm a good guy, and that if it was up to him he would have kept me. Then he let me walk in and pack up my stuff... They didn't tell me why I was released. He just kept saying how much everybody likes me.

When he was asked what happened next, he said, "I just couldn't believe it. I didn't know what I was going to do. Some of the other guys were asking me about the day (activities), and I told them I had been released. No one could believe it. It gets quiet, and everyone kind of tries to give you your space. They left the locker room."

Although never released himself, one player explained his perspective of an organization's communicative warning signs of an impending release. He has developed this theory based on observation. "Well, there is so many different scenarios (of why players are released). I think that analyzing your own situation, if you're not doing very well, and they're like oh don't worry about it, and you have that sense...there's something wrong." When asked to elaborate, he explained that a coach's communicative style will suddenly change around a player about to be released. The coach will "give up" on the player and stop encouraging the player to perform better. Another player who has never been released offered a perspective that being released can actually help a player's career:

No one would ever say "you're done." If it came down to that, they would release you. You know, some organizations typically horde their players. You have twenty-six, twenty-seven year olds in the Florida state league [A ball], or double A, where if the players got released and had good agents or put up a good year, he could go to a younger club [organization] where he'd be in double A, triple A, or maybe have a chance to make the big league team. ["Younger club" refers to an organization that is typically filled with younger, inexperienced players, either due to a smaller budget, or being new in the baseball market and not having the

ability to sign older players who are in long- term baseball contracts with other organizations.] I think organizations hold players back a little bit because they appreciate the talents [of organizationally considered marginal players] and don't let them spread their wings and fly, and see what they're made of.

Trust

I guess I believe what they tell me

There is a low trust level towards the organization on the part of the players interviewed. Two questions were asked of the players to determine trust levels: "Do you trust the organization to make decisions with your best interests in mind?" and "Have you ever felt misled by your organization?" In addition to these questions, the players themselves often introduced statements referring to their low trust of their organization.

When the participants were asked if they felt the organization has their best interests in mind when making decisions, all but two of the men answered negatively. Nearly all respondents answered variations of, "no," they do not believe the organization acts in accordance to the players' best interests.

The explanation the players gave for their opinions was based on the minor league structure. First, there are several men competing for one position. It is in the organization's best interests to make decisions based on the performance of the players. "If I perform, I stay. If not, I go. The relationship is on an as need basis... you do good, they love you. You don't, they try to find someone else to replace you." Another player echoed this when he explained the organizational environment: "It is pretty much every man for himself. If you win [as a team] along the way, great. But to get to the top you have to perform individually."

Second, the distance both geographically and socially between the players and decision makers creates an environment where the organization cannot act in accordance to the individual players' interests' because the organization does not know the player.

Third, since an organization has money invested in a particular player, it's assumed that it is the organization's best interest to make decisions regarding its high investment players. A note of interest: All players responded to the question as if advancing levels is in the best interests of the players. "If they have money invested in you, they'll give you more of a chance. If not, you have to do good year after year for them to really want to keep you around."

One player drew a distinction regarding "acting in accordance to a player's best interests." He answered this question by explaining that if it is in a player's best interest to learn and improve the tasks associated with his position, then the organization has coaches in place to help him. However, the front office does not consider players' interests when making decisions regarding players' careers. "No. Well maybe if it's about something tangible. Like, mechanics of hitting, fielding, and pitching. Cuz that's your career. That's something you deal with. They'll work with you with that. But they will not, [consider a player's interests regarding] a level that you think you should be at or how you're treated, no. I've never heard of anything like that."

The two players who believe the organization acts on their behalf both share the same viewpoint. They believe that the organization's interests and players' interests are in agreement (to advance the player to a higher level), and therefore the organization will act in accordance to the players' best interests. "I trust in the organization's intentions to get the best out of any player and get them to the big leagues to help the team win."

Although the organization often makes decisions to demote a player to a lower level or release the player of his job completely, these players do not mention these aspects of organizational decisions. The second player also provided a variation of the first player's statement: "I really do trust them. They are working for the same goal as me and that is to be in the big leagues."

The second question that was aimed at gauging the level of trust players feel for their organization is: "Do you feel that the organization has misled you?" A majority of the participants said they do not feel misled by their organization because there is no information in their environment; therefore, they could not say they felt misled. Only one participant confirmed that he has felt misled by his organization.

The responses were similar to the one exhibited by the first player interviewed. "Misled? No. Not at all. I feel like what they told you happened. When they did tell me things." This answer was followed with a clarification by the interviewer. "You feel that the organization does not give you information very often, though the information is usually correct?" The participant said "You got it."

In addition to these two questions, other trust statements were produced in the interviews as well. In one player's case, he was in the process of leaving one organization to play baseball for a new organization. When asked if he believed the information he was given by his new organization, he answered that he trusts his new organization more than his old one due to the increased communication. "I can only believe what they tell me right now, but they have communicated with me very well, so I guess I do."

Several other participants cited examples of times when they have heard conflicting information that they believed came from the organization, but the inaccuracy

of the information became attributed to a breakdown in source reliability. Information provided directly by the front office organization is believed to be correct and true; whereas, information provided by coaches and managers is sometimes found to be inaccurate. Many players provided examples of times when they were told one thing by a coach or manager, but something else happened. One player explained this perspective when asked if he has felt misled by the organization: “I wouldn't say misled, but I was told I was going to be starting left field in AA last spring through hearsay from a manager. I ended up in high A.”

Motivation

Does the current communication style help or hurt your performance?

When players were asked if the communication provided by the organization affected their performances, the players suggested a variety of motivational performance sources and communication effects. In several cases, coaches' and managers' actions and words were motivational, but their input was regarded as having a limited effect on the player. Other players explained that they believe the current communication climate impedes their performances.

Often the participants responded that their motivational sources are internal and that the communication they receive from coaches and the organization is viewed as informational rather than motivational. “The coaches were good for the most part about that [motivating players], but my performance is all on me since it is my own career.” Another player echoes this perspective, “I would say it was a mixture, [when asked who

motivates him] but my own motivation has made me a better baseball player than the organizations have made me.”

In one player’s case, it is peer motivation that helps him perform at his best. He listens to respected players more than coaches or managers. “From player to player, it’s a little more respected and understood, instead of managers coming down on you like “Hey do this. You gotta do that.’ If it comes from one of your peers...like if I have a player tell me to do something, I listen a lot better.”

In contrast to being motivated by organizational communication, it is the lack of informational communication that affects one player’s performance negatively. The energy he used wondering what the organization was thinking caused him stress. He explained:

Sometimes not knowing is worse than knowing. I think when you’re doing really well it would be nice to know if they are planning on moving you up, or vice versa if you're not doing well. Like I said, after playing for four years, I have learned not to let things I can't control affect my playing.

Echoing this player’s perspective, another player felt that the current communication method in the minor leagues hinders his performance as well. He explained that often players are told placating lies rather than truthful statements. If he were told he is not performing as well compared to another player, this would provide a standard for him to work toward, and he would work harder to become better than the other player. He explained:

Sometimes they just tell you things you want to hear. Things that will keep you quiet. So you don’t get pissed off and cause trouble. Like, if you want more playing time, but they have a high draft pick who requires a certain amount of playing time, they might not tell you. Because they don’t want you to cause trouble.

He went on to explain that while this method of white lies keeps potential flares up from occurring, it negatively impacts his performance:

If they told me “you’re not as good as this guy.” I would make sure I worked harder and more, just to get better than that guy. But sometimes they just tell you something to make you happy. Some guys might be pissed off to hear they are not good enough. But I would be motivated to work harder.

Can the organization do anything to increase your motivation?

In terms of added benefits that would encourage a player’s motivation, the participants did not consider this an easy question to respond to. This is perhaps due to the inherent drive that seems to motivate the players interviewed. None of the players named minor league monetary compensation or could suggest a benefit that matched their own internal drive.

The players did suggest examples of monetary compensation, days off, and more communication as elements that would make their experience in the minor leagues more pleasurable, though not necessarily increase their motivation.

When the participants were asked why they enjoyed playing for one organization over another, some cited improved health insurance benefits or monetary reasons for preferring one organization over another. However, when they were specifically asked if baseball franchise organizations could provide an incentive to encourage the players to play at their best, all of the players explained that their motivation is “making it to the big leagues” and that other benefits or perks will differentiate one organization from another, but not cause them to pursue careers with particular teams.

Although amenities such as paychecks, health insurance, and signing bonuses seem to make one organization more attractive than another, these are not motivators to play to one's best ability. "I'm not going to get rich or be able to retire on an extra thousand dollars a month" said one player. Although another player said that due to improved health insurance, he preferred one former organization over others that he has worked for, but this was not enough to create a commitment to the franchise or motivate him to play his best for that particular organization.

If it is not the organization that motivates you to perform at your best, where does your motivation come from?

A desire to advance to the major leagues is the driving motivation for all players interviewed. "The minor leagues are the same everywhere. We all want to get to the big leagues" This statement was repeated in various forms throughout all of the interviews. When one player was asked if the promise of big league money was a motivator, he responded: "That is what keeps me going. The desire to make it to the big leagues and then the money that goes with it."

Additionally, all except one of the players interviewed discontinued their educations when they began playing professional baseball. One player suggested that many players continue playing baseball when the opportunity to be moved into the major leagues is minimal because they have nothing else to fall back on.

Job Satisfaction

Screaming girls, lots of fans, intense competition, and the promise of lots of money

When the players were questioned about the prospective perks or benefits from working for their organizations, they instead began to cite negative aspects regarding being a minor league baseball player. Poor traveling conditions, insufficient pay, a long schedule with no days off, little job security, clashing ethnic cultures, and being separated from friends and family for months at a time were reasons given for disliking the minor league lifestyle. Below one player explained his frustrations with the minor league life:

I've got more important things in my life, than just playing minor league ball. I have known since I was 10, 11 years old that it's not a lavish life. You don't get paid well, the travel's terrible; you're associating with people that you're not accustomed to. You're learning different cultures, and it's kind of tough. You might be rooming with a guy from Venezuela or wherever.

After the players cited the negative aspects regarding their jobs, several of them then compensated for their negativity by explaining why they continue to pursue a career in baseball. The most frequently occurring answers to why they continue to stay in the minor league system is their aversion to the corporate world, their love of baseball, or the opportunity to "play a game everyday that fascinates 8 year olds."

An aversion to working in a corporate 9-5 job was the most common response when asked why they continue to pursue a baseball career. "If you don't play baseball, then you have to sit in an office. So I try to play well and stay out of the office."

After questioning one player's perceptions of the communication style of his organization, the topic switched to job satisfaction. He said: "I think more communication would lead to more job satisfaction. You know what you're doing, and you know where you stand with the team. It would definitely make your job satisfying."

Although this answer makes sense, it is possible that the conversation and ordering of the questions led him to this conclusion.

When the players were asked what they find satisfying about their jobs, none of the scholarly suggestions of trust, openness, or commitment was used in the answers. “Screaming girls, lots of fans, intense competition, and someday lots of money,” said one player.

An organization’s reputation was listed as a possible source of future job satisfaction by one player. Explaining that he has always been a fan of one particular team located in the northeastern part of the United States, he said he would be proud to represent it if he ever had the opportunity. He qualified his answer though, by saying, “I don’t think I would ever take less money just to play for them.”

A majority of the players answered that they receive satisfaction of living a long held dream. All of these players have played baseball throughout their elementary and high school years, and worked toward the goal of achieving an opportunity to become a minor league baseball player. The job satisfaction comes from them looking into their past and realizing that they have accomplished their dreams. One player said:

The satisfaction is the fact that you are doing what you dreamed of when you were a little boy. How many people are living their dream [from] when they were 5 years old? There is a lot of pride of putting on a major league uniform. You get your first taste in spring training when you are just a low level minor leaguer and when you are wearing the big league uniform it is like, “wow I made it”.

For these players, job satisfaction does not come from the organization that they represent, but the fact that they have achieved so much, and have a job “a thousand other guys want.” As one player explained, “There is no shortage of guys who want your job.”

Player perspective: Is the current system effective?

When one player was asked if the current minor league system is effective to get players into the major leagues, his responded by explaining, “If you look at how many failures versus. Successes, then the answer would be obvious: unsuccessful. But that's not how baseball works.” His statement illustrates that MLB organizations employ hundreds of men to help only a few advance to the majors. If the system was truly successful at developing excellent players, then MLB teams would be flooded with talented men, and a crisis would result where the teams would be forced to expand or reconfigure their concept of a “talented baseball player.” Interestingly, this player still participates, though he sees that a majority of his colleagues, possibly himself included, are viewed as sacrificial lambs to be used and thrown away so that a few golden players are given ample years to develop into major league baseball players.

After a few interviews, it became obvious that for the players, making it to the major leagues is worth almost any sacrifice. These men train year round for six months of pay. They leave their homes and families to pursue this dream and suspend or defer their college educations for the opportunity to play professional baseball. Many of these players receive little monetary incentive and often have little to show for their efforts at the end of their careers. Hearing stories and examples of players who have been passed over for promotions, players who have spent years trying to “prove themselves” to an organization that has shown them little recognition led to the development of the simple question, “Why do you participate and continue to play when you know that the system is built to allow a few to succeed and the majority of players never reach the major leagues?” There was no definitive, clear response to this question. Some of the players

answered this question philosophically, “I think I’m as good as the big leaguers,” or “There’s always a chance.”

Other players just said that they want to play for as long as they can because they know that once they stop playing then the dream is over. One player explained how the minor league system continuously pushes players to continue to play without stopping to consider other career options:

You cannot take a break in baseball. Once you quit and no longer have recent numbers, it’s over. Teams will think you’re hurt or out of shape. And they move on. Once you quit, even if you change your mind and want to start playing again, you can’t. I have been trying to get on a professional team my whole life. Now that I’m here, I don’t want to have regrets that I made the wrong decision when it’s time to retire.

Results from this research have shown that the players interviewed have strong perceptions of the communication climate within their organization. The relationship the players have developed with their organization is often weak and has caused them confusion and stress. Despite perceived obstacles, the players explain that they are committed to their career and are committed to advancing within the MLB structure. Below is a comprehensive discussion of the relationship dimensions as explained by the players.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Discussion of the results

The results of this study exploring dimensions of relationship perceptions in minor league baseball franchises found that the majority of the baseball players interviewed were not satisfied with the current relationships that they have with their management organizations. When questioned about their organizations openness, trust and commitment the majority of those interviewed responded negatively. Few players questioned answered positively to all three elements. Many players conveyed concern that their organizations disproportionately help some players achieve over others, withhold information, and give players a limited voice regarding the direction of their career. Despite difficulties with the organization, the players' desire to achieve and perform at their best on a consistent basis remains strong. Questions about job satisfaction and motivation were answered by a majority of the players as strong, but unrelated to their employers' organizations. Below is a discussion of the players' relationship perceptions.

Communication format

During the interview process, it became apparent that many players believe that their organization have poor communication practices. The players expressed a desire for an increased amount of information, and with that an increased accuracy of information. A reliable channel for information to be passed and an ability to communicate to higher levels of management was also commonly desired. The players interviewed also stated that they have experienced confusion and stress regarding the communication style in their organization. It is common for players to utilize other sources of information rather than try to approach decision making staff members.

The players claimed that they receive little information regarding organizational selections, events and goals. Several examples were given of times when an organizational decision was made and the player did not receive the reasoning behind that decision.

Players interviewed also expressed doubt regarding information accuracy. The amount of inaccurate information they receive increases their skepticism regarding the credibility of the source. In the organization structure, the further removed their source was from organizational decision makers, the less reliable the information became.

The players believe that the poor channels of information in their organization contribute to an overall poor communication climate. Information given to players through a secondhand source can vary greater depending on the informant's level within the organization.

The players interviewed stated that they have sought information to understand their responsibilities, performance expectations, and organizational structure. However, their

inquiries are often met with inconsistent information. Rather than rely on the rumor mill environment, the players turn to other sources such as fellow players, or agents. Situations such as staff turnover, the players own feeling of marginal status, and inaccessibility to organizational decision makers contribute to the players' inability to hear and be heard.

Openness

All of the players interviewed believe that there are decisions made and information created that they are not privy to. Many of the players believe that not receiving this information stems from geographical, structural, and organizational issues. Some players cited stress, confusion or anger with organizational actions without also providing explanatory information.

A majority of the players interviewed perceive that other players receive more or less information than themselves, based on their status within the organization. The players perceive an inequitable atmosphere of openness in their organization. This favoritism is cited as a primary complaint within their organization. Several players view the inequality as another obstacle in their path to the major leagues. The players deal with this condition by simply tolerating it. Many players believe the reason for this inequality is due to the organization's goals for the minor league players. When only a few players are needed to fill the ranks of the major leagues, it is in the organization's best interest to invest in only the players it believes will eventually fill that position.

Trust

When discussing levels of trust, the players indicate low to no trust of their organization. The high turnover and public release of players was cited as contributors to an atmosphere of instability and distrust among the players. Based on observation, the players perceive that their organization is using them for a short amount of time until a more talented player is available to replace them.

Commitment

The players interviewed expressed a range of commitment levels to their organization. Most players stated that they felt little to no organizational commitment. Only a few stated a high organizational commitment. Organizational turnovers, a desire for an opportunity to break into the major leagues, and a perceived lack of personal value to the organization were cited as reasons contributing to low organizational commitment.

When comparing the players' opinions against the relationship elements that Grunig and Hon (1999), and Ledingham and Brunig (2000) agreed is crucial for the productivity and efficiency of an organization (openness, commitment, and trust) the players' perceptions do not reflect an experience that these scholars describe as contributors to a successful organization. Yet the minor leagues have been a proven success in the baseball industry for producing quality players prepared to compete in the major leagues. The players struggle with an apathetic feeling towards their organizations. While resenting

feeling disposable, their desire to play ball has contributed to keeping them on their chosen career path.

Job Satisfaction

Although the players were quick to point out their sacrifices surrounding their chosen career path, when the players were questioned regarding their job satisfaction, they responded that they experience a strong satisfaction relating to their job. It seems that their minor league lifestyle offers unique opportunities that these players find rewarding.

The players feel fulfilled that they have “achieved their dream.” The players described satisfaction of having achieved a desire they formulated and carried since they were young children. In addition to this self satisfaction, they cited fans, crowds, and possibly large future earnings as sources of job satisfaction.

Motivation

The players interviewed acknowledged the coaches and staff of their organization with marginal to some ability to motivate them to continue playing at their best performance level. Most of the players credited themselves as large sources for motivation and expressed that they see their career as their own responsibility, and that it is a mix of aversion from a corporate office job, and a desire to advance to the major leagues that motivates them.

MLB culture

One last concept of organizational management has been observed though was never asked in the player interviews. This is the concept of organizational culture as a pervasive, yet unseen manner in which an organization operates. Responses from the participants provide clues into the organizational environment that the players live within. Referred to as subtle and unconscious phenomena that are only apparent to organizational non-members, Schein (1985) pointed to norms, values, and assumptions as indications of organizational culture. During the course of the interviews, many players provided insight into an organizational culture shared by all the franchises through which the players were affiliated, and that the individual franchises also have individual cultures of their own.

One example of organizational culture was the players' initial uncertainty when committing to giving an interview. Several of the players said they had been given lectures and warnings regarding the ability of the media to manipulate quotes from players to be printed out of context. The players' wary response to being interviewed was repeated across several organizational franchises.

An example of a franchise individual culture was shared when a player explained a value regarding some franchises with whom he has been affiliated. He explained that some franchises prefer to employ a certain type of individual over others. One particular franchise places significance on a players' religious background, while another is "known" to employee 'bad guys. "

By understanding that these players have been influenced and are predisposed to act and think in accordance to their organizational culture, many of the answers provided

by the players are a product of the cultural influence that the MLB franchises has created. By accepting that the players participate in a world of unwritten rules, subconscious gestures, and silent messages, one can realize that there are questions the players cannot answer. Also there are things that players have subconsciously have accepted. This research was not focused on learning the culture of minor league baseball, but rather understanding that the answers provided in this research are created in the context of that players' organizational culture.

An understanding of the players perceived relationship dimensions as well as job satisfaction and motivation within the context of organizational culture will help to increase awareness of potential organizational weaknesses within an MLB franchise. Knowledge gained from this research could also potentially help relationship management theorists understand boundaries of the theory and encourage this theory to be applied to environments outside of traditional corporate settings. Next is a discussion of the implications for this research while also addressing limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This research has helped increase understanding of individual perceptions of relationship dimensions within their sporting environment. Public relations practitioners and sports personnel both benefit from unique aspects provided by this research. Although this research interviewed 19 players from a fraction of MLB organizations, the responses provided insight and areas of focus for future research direction. This study has shown that these players all have overarching complaints about their organization such as communication channels, methods, and results. The players highlight weak areas when questioned about core relationship elements such as trust, openness and commitment. Future research is suggested to determine if these weaknesses are a pervasive complaint among minor league players across all 30 franchises.

Implications for MLB baseball

This study helped to introduce the concept of relationship management into the operational process of current MLB minor league practices. Specifically, by introducing relationship management theory to a sports environment such as the minor leagues, this study begins to cross boundaries regarding aspects of study in sports literature. New facets of sports inquiry are introduced that need to be considered, rather than the economic, marketing, and sociological aspects that currently saturate sports research.

Implications for relationship management theory

Relationship management theory has been furthered in two ways. First, the method of using online qualitative interviews has proven to be a potential new method of understanding relationship management theory. In the future, this integration of technology and research methods could potentially be used to understand attitudes, cognitions, and perceptions that are uniquely expressed in this format.

Second, these findings will enrich relationship management theory since the theory has been applied in a sporting environment. Literature regarding relationship management theory has previously focused on a corporate social environment. Applying this theory outside of the typical corporate environment will test its boundaries while also strengthening the theory.

Discussion of the method

It has been suggested that perceptions regarding an organization's relationships with key constituents can best be appraised by focusing on the elements that exist to create the relationship (Grunig, & Hon, 1999). This study has followed that advice through the use of questions focused on the relationship tenets. However, Grunig and Hon suggest that relationships be explored through the use of quantitative surveys consisting of yes or no answers, and this study instead uses qualitative interviews.

The interview questions were formulated based on Grunig and Hon's (1999) survey suggestions and changed into an open ended format. One example is: "This organization can be relied on to keep its promises" was turned into "Do you believe your

organization keeps its promises?” It is believed that although the change in format reached fewer players than a survey for time constraint reasons, the new interview format allowed for a thorough understanding of these players’ opinions, and perceptions.

In this research, the questions were used as an initial guideline, but very often the person being interviewed could control the direction of the interview. At times the player would introduce subjects and topics, and at other times the interviewer would ask about subjects pertinent to the research topic.

Limitations of this Study

There are two limitations to this study. First, once the online interview was in progress, the amount of time used for typing hindered the amount of questions that could be asked before a player grew restless and lost interest in the interview. Second, the use of interviews captures the participant’s frame of mind at the time of the interview. The natural fluidity of relationships means that opinions rarely stay the same over an extended period of time.

The first problem arose due to the online qualitative method chosen for this research. The answers to the proposed questions took much longer to type than to verbally express. Therefore, the interviews took a long time to complete a shorter number of questions. (Most interviews lasted approximately 50 minutes but an approximate total of 15 questions were asked, leaving an average of three minutes between answers.)

Next, although this study is very insightful for understanding the perspectives of the minor league players interviewed, it is important to note that the interviews were

given once, and that the answers only reflect the current state of the relationship at the *time the interview was given*. Relationships by nature are fluid and ongoing processes. Relationships are created through experiences and while this study is useful for describing the player's state of mind at one particular point in his career, it cannot be used to describe an extended and ongoing relationship.

Future Research Direction

Regarding directions for future research, a topically similar qualitative study needs to be completed with managers in MLB organizations. If the players perceive weaknesses with their relationships in their organization, the organizations' opinions of their relationships with minor league players should be addressed.

Second, a case study of relationship management within the minor league structure is strongly recommended. Using multiple sources and a variety of methods, one could explore the dynamics of organization-employee relationships in baseball at a greater depth than this study was able to provide.

Furthermore, a quantitative study using the relationship framework could provide information that is unable to be collected qualitatively. Through the use of a quantitative method survey, scholars would be able to understand individual relationship perceptions in greater numbers than a qualitative study allows.

Finally, relationships should not be thought of as individual elements or processes, but as a cohesive process. This research did not address all suggested elements of relationship management theory, nor did it explore the relationship types that exist

within the theory. Collecting more information regarding the players' perspectives in these areas would contribute to a more comprehensive perspective of the relationships existing in minor league baseball.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study.

We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called:

The person who is in charge of this research study is Michelle Keating. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge.

The research will be done on the computer through the use of AOL Instant Messenger.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the development of employer- player/employee relationships within the Major League Baseball (MLB) sports industry by proposing, and then seeking answers to questions regarding MLB's use of communication to minor league players. This study will be used to complete required thesis requirements for the principal investigator.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to

Appendix A (continued)

Meet with the principal investigator once at a designated time using AOL instant messenger

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes

Provide thorough answers to questions presented during the interview

Alternatives

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

Benefits

We don't know if you will get any benefits by taking part in this study.

Risks or Discomfort

There are no known risks to those who take part in this study. The interviews will be confidential and there will be no names or organizational names used within the report.

Compensation

We will not pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Confidentiality

We must keep your study records confidential. The interviews will be printed for research purposes and used by the principal investigator for approximately 3 months. The documents will be kept no longer than 6 months. If the interviews are provided to the thesis chair professor, Dr. Derina Holtzhausen, there will be no names attached to the documents, all interviews will be anonymous.

However, certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

Dr. D. Holtzhausen University of South Florida

Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety. These include:

Appendix A (Continued)

the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB. Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study, to please the investigator or the research staff. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

New information about the study

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

Questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Michelle Keating at 516-851-1104.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

If you experience an adverse event or unanticipated problem call *(PI / coordinator)* at *(telephone)*.

If you have questions about your rights as a person taking part in this research study you may contact the Florida Department of Health Institutional Review Board (DOH IRB) at (866) 433-2775 (toll free in Florida) or 850-245-4585.

Appendix A (Continued)

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used.
- What the potential benefits might be.
- What the known risks might be.

I also certify that he or she does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research. This person speaks the language that was used to explain this research.

This person reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her.

This person does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give informed consent.

Appendix A (Continued)

This person is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

APPENDIX B

List of interview questions

*This is an interview guide developed for a semi-structured interview. During the interview, questions may need to be modified or introduced depending on the direction of the conversation. The interview will begin with a few general questions, and then become more specific. The specific questions have been grouped together under relationship conditions.

General Questions

Could you tell me a little bit about your organization? How it differs from other organizations? How many other organizations do you have to compare it to?

What are your responsibilities in the organization?

What comes to your mind first when you hear the name of your organization? Please explain why.

How would you describe your relationship with the organization?

What does it mean to you to work for this organization?

How much do you identify with the organizations goals?

Do you feel a sense of obligation to stay with this organization? Do they feel that way about you?

Appendix B (Continued)

What additional things could this organization do to improve your relationship, motivation, performance?

Organizational Climate

For you as a player, is there a difference between this organization and another one?

Would you be willing to invest extra time and effort into your organization? Why or why not?

How long would you like to maintain a relationship with members from this organization?

How important do you believe it is for the organization to build a long term, positive relationship with its employee? Why do you think so?

What are the tools, resources and technology provided to you from the organization to help you in your performance, motivation and career?

What are the rewards provided to you for performing your best?

Within the organization, whom do you interact with? Are these people important to your organization? Are they important to you? Why?

Where and when do you normally talk to them?

Appendix B (Continued)

What do you talk about?

Do you feel the people you talk to in the organization have the ability to accomplish what it says it will do?

Do you feel you have a relationship with this organization? Why or why not? What initiated the development of your relationship with this organization?

Describe your relationship with the organization.

To what extent do you believe the organization listens to you? Who do you go to when you need to talk to the organization? To what extent do you feel the organization contacts you converse with have control over you?

Commitment

Do you feel this organization is working on a long term commitment to you?

Compared to other organizations, do you feel a loyalty to this one more? Why?

What examples can you provide to show that the organization has kept or broken promises to you?

Can you provide any example that shows this organization wants to make a long term commitment to you?

Please talk about things you have done to cultivate or maintain a long term relationship with this organization.

Appendix B (Continued)

Satisfaction

How satisfied are you with the relationship you have with the organization? Please explain why you are or are not satisfied.

Do you feel that you benefit from this organization?

Do you enjoy dealing with this organization?

Does this organization work to satisfy your needs?

Have you accomplished anything of value with this organization? Do you attribute it to your work, the organizations, or both?

Trust

Does this organization treat you fairly?

When this organization makes a decision, is it concerned about you?

Can this organization be counted on to keep its promises?

Does this organization take your opinion into account when making decisions?

Do you feel this organization is competent enough to achieve its goals?

Does this organization have the ability to say what it says it will do?

Do you believe this organization is guided by sound business principals? Integrity?

Please provide a descriptive word for the running of this organization.

Appendix B (Continued)

Do you feel this organization has misled you?

Do you watch this organization to be sure that it is not taking advantage of you? Do you watch it to be sure it follows through with what it says it will do?

Where do you seek information about this organization?

Would you be willing to allow this organization to make decisions regarding you or your career?