MLB'S NEOCOLONIAL PRACTICES IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC ACADEMY SYSTEM

by

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ABSTRACT

PATRICK C. GENTILE. MLB'S neocolonial practices in the Dominican Republic academy system. (Under the direction of DR. DANIEL A. GRANO)

Major League Baseball (MLB) has operated in the Dominican Republic for many years in order to find cheap labor that is refined and shipped to the United States, with goals that a few players will develop into great players. Once a player is signed by an MLB team, they are assigned to the team's academy, where they train, house, and educate players. However, these actions by MLB are neocolonial, where the players are dominated and controlled in all aspects. I will analyze how MLB justifies their practices in the Dominican Republic, where I will specifically analyze how this system is justified rhetorically. Through the education in the academies, surveillance, and the American dream, I argue that these practices are neocolonial and is justified as altruism, where the Dominican players are seemingly benefitting from MLB's controlling actions.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Professional baseball in the United States is comprised of players from different walks of life chasing one major goal, to play at the highest level possible and to reap the benefits of playing in the world's premier baseball league. As of 2017, approximately 2/3 of Major League Baseball (MLB) players were from the United States, and 1/3 (259 players) was composed of foreign born players. This influx of talent is on pace to increase, as the number of foreign players is constantly rising (Percentage of Foreign Players Rises, 2012). The Dominican Republic had 93 players on Opening Day rosters in 2017, the most of any one country apart from the United States and equates to about three Dominican players per team (Reilly, 2017). The second most players from an international country is Venezuela at 63 players. Adrian Burgos, a History professor who studies U.S. and Latino sports history, puts extra significance on Dominican players in MLB by saying, "What makes these figures even more amazing is that Venezuela has three times the population of the Dominican Republic" (Ghosh, 2014, para 18). MLB relies on Dominican players more than any other international country because baseball is more than just a game there; it is also an opportunity to escape one of the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. Citizens are deprived of economic and educational opportunities, so baseball is the easiest way to leave this impoverished country (Klein, 1991). Since MLB is a globalized and multicultural entity, it provides an opportunity for both domestic and international players to succeed playing professional baseball. For Dominican players to arrive in the United States, they must first attend a MLB teams' Dominican academy, where MLB develops players and teaches them skills needed to be successful in the United States.

Foreign talent is vital to MLB, as foreign-born players are signed to much cheaper contracts than domestic players and this minor investment can pay great dividends for MLB teams. The average signing bonus for a Dominican player is $94,000, but the minimum signing bonus for a first-round player in the draft is more than $2 million, and the first overall pick is worth more than $8 million (Ghosh, 2014; 2018 draft bonus pools, pick values, 2018). Players eligible for the draft are from the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. Therefore, MLB teams use the "boatload mentality" when working in the Dominican Republic. In 1996, then Colorado Rockies vice president Dick Balderson said that with a $100,000 investment, the club could sign four domestic prospects or twenty Dominican players (for an average as low as $5,000 per player). There is a much better chance that at least one of the Dominicans would pan out as a major league player, as compared to the smaller group of U.S. prospects (Bretón & Villegas, 1999). Former New York Mets General Manager Steve Phillips voiced a similar opinion by stating, "You can develop 30 to 45 players from the Dominican for what it costs to sign a second-round draft pick in the States" (Ghosh, 2014, para 13). Adrian Burgos expands on this mass signing practice by saying,

> "For the U.S. baseball clubs, signing and training Dominican boys generally offers little financial risk. These kids – most of whom are poor and often malnourished – are signed largely on their potential. With American-style coaching and nutrition, they are groomed to become good players, with a hope that a lucky few can make the big leagues, or at least the minors" (Ghosh, 2014, para 11).

By signing dozens more Dominican players than American players allows for the opportunity that one of them will become the next David Ortiz or Vladimir Guerrero from the Dominican Republic.

1.1 Baseball's Background

The Dominican-to-MLB pipeline is an important representation of how the American dream of upward mobility and opportunities for all who seek them and American culture have influenced baseball in the Dominican Republic. Baseball's origins in the United States are a matter of controversy, and there are many theories. Baseball is considered "America's game," but historical evidence does not support the notion that baseball is American. Since baseball is seen as American, foreigners have a tough time finding success playing it in the United States. It is ironic that baseball excludes many individuals, yet it is not American in its origin. Baseball is similar to cricket and rounders, popular games played in England that became organized sports in the 17th century. Historians claim that cricket and rounders arrived in America when the colonies were founded, which eventually evolved into baseball. Alexander Cartwright, a bookseller from New York and the man who invented the rules and created the baseball diamond in 1845, founded the first organized baseball team called the Knickerbockers in 1839, before the new rules became official. In 1953, the U.S. Congress confirmed Cartwright's influence on baseball, so this is the most accurate story of baseball's origins in the United States (History of Baseball, n.d.).

Even though this is most likely how baseball came to be, there is another myth that has been popular for well over a century. Abner Doubleday, a Civil War General, has long been credited for founding baseball during the war in Cooperstown, New York in

1839. In 1903, a journalist by the name of Henry Chadwick wrote about how rounders and baseball evolved and are essentially the same sport. Albert Spalding, a former pitcher and sporting goods entrepreneur, disagreed with the fact that baseball may have derived from English sports because of his U.S. patriotism. Spalding fired back and disputed this article by writing one himself claiming that baseball is American and founded in the U.S. To settle the argument, he called on a commission to investigate baseball's origins. In 1905, the Mills Commission, featuring seven prominent sporting men, called on the public for any knowledge on how baseball was created. Abner Graves, a 71-year-old mining engineer from Denver, wrote back saying that Abner Doubleday invented the game in Cooperstown, a quaint town in New York that that represents pastoral America values. He also included in the letter a diagram of a baseball field drawn by Doubleday. Graves' letter to the commission ran the next day in newspapers across the country, and the myth of Abner Doubleday and baseball's American roots became a nationwide phenomenon. Historians have since considered this claim to be false, and even Doubleday never wrote about baseball in any of his 67 diaries (Vannozzi, 2018). Even though Doubleday's story is a myth, Cooperstown became synonymous with baseball, and is now where the Baseball Hall of Fame is located.

The United States spread baseball to the Caribbean and Latin America in a variety of ways. First, Nemisio Guilló, a Cuban student studying at Spring Hill College in Mobile, AL, returned to Cuba in 1864 after graduation with a bat and ball from his playing days in the U.S. This baseball equipment was considered "the first to be seen in Cuba" (Burgos, 2007, p. 20). Two years later, a group of American sailors stationed their ship in Havana, and invited a few local Cubans to play in a game with them. A baseball

diamond was created near the harbor, and games with Cubans became commonplace. Baseball became a popular sport for Cubans after these events, and Cuba helped to spread the game to other countries in the Caribbean, especially the Dominican Republic. The Ten Years' War (1868-78), in which Cuba fought for independence against Spain, led many Cubans to flee brutality. Many Cubans settled in the Dominican Republic, where they brought baseball with them and became beloved by Dominicans (Regalado, 1998). Thus, the United States is indirectly responsible for bringing the game to the Dominican Republic.

Baseball in the Dominican Republic did not only derive, however, from Cuba. U.S. capitalists saw economic opportunities in the sugar industry in the Dominican Republic, as the industry became prosperous starting around 1870. American investors began focusing their time and money on sugar cane, where they built railroads and port facilities to transport sugar, while also constructing sugar refineries. American capitalists then began purchasing land with intentions of continuing the industry's growth, where their presence became even greater on the island. Soon after these investors arrived in the Dominican Republic, many sugar companies were founded, and local Dominicans began working the fields for American entrepreneurs. The U.S. businessmen played baseball in the fields near the refineries, which soon caught on to the Dominican sugar cane workers. During breaks in the hot Dominican sun, workers either played baseball or continued to cut sugar cane, which could be where their passion for baseball derives (Bretón & Villegas, 1999). Baseball became so popular with both Americans and Dominicans in the sugar cane field that games against one other became common. Before long, the refineries constructed teams consisting of Dominican workers, and the refinery teams

from around the island would play each other. American sugar and fruit companies in the Dominican Republic constructed fields across the Dominican and offered half working days, so the remainder of the day could be spent playing baseball. The purpose was to keep workers near the land that they worked. Great players emerged from the fields of the sugar and fruit companies, including arguably the best Dominican player ever, Juan Marichal (Bretón & Villegas, 1999). Thus, a combination of Americans and Cubans are responsible for spreading baseball to the Dominican Republic (Klein, 1991). These historical events demonstrate the significance the United States has on baseball in the Caribbean.

1.2. Dominican Academies

The academies act as a team's Dominican headquarters, where they sign and develop players in hopes that some will be good enough to get promoted to play in the United States. The academies are also the first step to the minor leagues. The academies are established solely for international players. They house, feed, and train, and educate them on American culture. Some academies even offer prospects a high school education. However, the main goal is to produce major league caliber talent. To do so, each academy has one or sometimes two teams that compete with each other. The competition between academies is called the Dominican Summer League (DSL), and the best players will be promoted to play rookie ball in the United States (Dominican Summer League, n.d.). All 30 MLB teams have an operating academy in the Dominican Republic, so the MLB pipeline begins in the Dominican Republic and the country's academies.

According to Klein (1991), "The academy is the baseball counterpart of the colonial outpost, the physical embodiment overseas of the parent franchise. It operates

more or less like the subsidiary of any other foreign company: it finds raw materials [talented athletes], refines them [trains the athletes], and ships abroad finished products [baseball players]" (p. 42). This is a perfect example of a relationship between a First World country and a developing country that centers around domination and subordination (Klein, 1995). Accordingly, I argue in this thesis that MLB maintains the academy system as a means of neocolonial control over its international prospects in the Dominican Republic at a moment when foreign labor is critical to MLB's profitability by controlling its prospects economically and culturally. More specifically, I analyze, with attention to internal discourse from MLB and reference to neocolonial literature, how MLB justifies and maintains this system rhetorically.

All of the MLB academies are located in the Dominican Republic, which shows the United States' physical presence on the island. When an international player signs with a team, regardless of country of origin, the player is assigned to one of the Dominican training academies. Puerto Rico and Cuba are the only exceptions to this rule. Puerto Ricans are selected in the MLB draft because it is a territory of the United States, so it must follow the rules that apply to draft-eligible American players (MLB.com). Cuba is also exempt from this because of the embargo that is placed on Cuba. Since the U.S. does not do business with Cuba, Cuban players must defect and make residence in a third-country before they can be scouted and signed. Oftentimes, drug cartels smuggle them out of Cuba for a percentage of the players' future salary, so Cubans are put in dangerous situations trying to sign a multi-million-dollar contract (Pagliery & Garcia, 2016).

Starting July 2nd each year, 16 year olds are eligible to sign contracts with MLB teams, but the baseball training begins at much younger ages, and education becomes irrelevant because prospective players abandon formal education to focus solely on baseball by the time they are young teenagers. The young Dominican players are found by buscónes, which comes from the Spanish word *buscar*, which means "to search" or "to look for." Essentially, buscónes are scouts who find and sign boys starting at thirteen to train and live with them, with the goal of getting the young player signed to a MLB contract. In the Dominican Republic, there are more than a thousand buscónes that hope to get a player signed in exchange for a percentage of his signing bonus. They have been criticized for exploiting players and for acting more like "hustlers or surrogate fathers," as they sometimes provide steroids so the player can perform better to sign for more money. On the other hand, the buscónes provide a sense of hope to escape poverty (Ruck, n.d.). While the buscónes have a mixed reputation, they allow the players to potentially find a better future, but in doing so, education is sacrificed. Education typically is not a priority for many young Dominicans, as the dropout rate for Dominicans is the highest in Latin America, where roughly 60% of children attend high school, and 80% of Dominicans do not have a high school diploma (McCullough, n.d.; Klein, 2014). These numbers may not be directly tied to baseball's importance on the island, but it could be a contributing factor.

Dominican players pursue careers in baseball mainly as a way to escape poverty, especially in the pursuit of opportunities for upward mobility that the Dominican Republic typically lacks. This is especially true for poor and rural Dominicans who do not have access to education or employment opportunities. Unlike in the United States,

where baseball is played mainly for fun, baseball is a vehicle to escape poverty in the Dominican Republic, where the average annual income is less than $5,000 (Brewster, 2017). Moreover, from 2000-2010, the poverty rate in the Dominican Republic was more than 50%, with 5 million people living on less than $1.25 a day, and 30% of the population being malnourished (Klein, 2014; Whyte, 2009). The main industries in the Dominican Republic are tourism and communications (e.g. newspapers, telephone companies) so those from rural areas do not have the resources available to pursue this type of work. Since the main industries on the island are difficult to come by, especially for those from poor backgrounds, baseball is seen as a way to make much more money than can be made by working in regular jobs. The average signing bonus that MLB franchises pay to Dominican players is $94,000, which is much higher than the average annual income in the Dominican Republic (Ghosh, 2014).

Once international players are signed, they immediately report to their academy to begin their professional baseball career. If they perform well in the academies, they will then get promoted to rookie ball in the United States to continue their journey in the pipeline. From there, they can get called up to play in Low A, High A, AA, AAA, then MLB if they are good enough. Even if players never make it to play in the United States at any level, the money they make as prospects is still life-changing. Adrian Burgos claims that they players “can use that money to buy his family a new home, a car, or even start a new business” (Ghosh, 2014, para 14). Klein (1991) argues that “even Dominican players who fail to reach the major leagues and play instead in American minor league cities are considered financially successful, and those who remain in the baseball academies for two years and do not play in North America at all still earn more money

than they would in a decade on the streets or in the cane field" (pp. 58-59). This is a contributing factor as to why Dominican boys pursue baseball as a means of income rather than an average job. If a player does reach the major leagues, the average salary significantly exceeds the average in the Dominican Republic. To put this into perspective, the average MLB player makes 660 times more annually than a middle-class job would pay in the Dominican Republic (Ghosh, 2014). However, the problem with relying on this type of work is that only a small percentage actually achieve stardom, as only 2-5% of the players signed to professional contracts and play in the academies make it to the MLB, and only 25% of players are promoted to play in single-A ball (Dale, 2017; Lagesse, 2016; Bautista, 2015).

The Dominican baseball academies were constructed beginning in the 1980s in order to seek cheaper labor. The first academy was constructed by Epy Guerrero, a Toronto Blue Jays scout who saw the potential major league talent in the Dominican Republic. The Blue Jays were the first team to construct a training facility for their Dominican prospects, which included baseball fields, housing, and dining facilities. The Los Angeles Dodgers saw Guerrero's vision and built an academy of their own led by scout Rafael Ávila in 1981. These two academies established a precedent: every other major league team followed their path and built academies of their own. The academies help teams to sign and develop young international talent for a fraction of what U.S. players would cost. Hanlon (2013) contends that this "boatload mentality" of signing many Dominicans for cheap is a form of child labor because the players are first scouted as cheap commodities. He claims that child labor "perpetuates poverty across generations by keeping children out of school and limiting their prospects for upward social mobility"

(p. 248). Since a lack of education to pursue baseball is an issue, many of the MLB academies offer education, and in some cases, they offer the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. However, Hanlon (2013) argues that the education in the academies is "useless for most Dominican children," and "inherently self-serving for MLB because the few that do make it to MLB stardom are better prepared to adapt and succeed under the MLB spotlight. On the other hand, the players that do not make it to the United States are left without the necessary life skills to survive in life after baseball" (p. 242). Not only do the academies provide a cost-efficient way of developing players, but they also train players in "English language skills, media relations basics, and strategies for negotiating U.S. cultural norms" (Gilbert, 2013, p. 127) This helps them adjust to life off the field, which can help their performance on the field because they are more comfortable in their new situation.

The academies have come a long way within the last fifteen years. In *Stealing Lives* (2002) Arturo J. Marcano Guevara and David P. Fidler compared the Cubs academy in 1997 to a "sweatshop," where nineteen players shared one bathroom with no running water. A coach also threatened players who underperformed with a gun. Another story was reported in the book that a player nearly became crippled when an illegitimate doctor stomped on his arm to put it back in place (Drysdale, 2013). In 2011, Yewri Guillén, a Washington Nationals prospect, died at the Nationals academy. Guillén complained of headaches and decided to sit out for part of a game. Johnny DiPulgia, the international scouting director for the Nationals, told him that people with headaches play through pain. After the pain did not subside, Guillén was sent to the trainer, where he was given aspirin and tea. The next day, Guillén developed a fever, and his personal trainer

and agent told his family that he needs to go to a hospital. He was originally denied treatment at a hospital because his contract with the Nationals was not finalized, so he did not have health insurance. Guillén was then taken to a nearby Cuban-Dominican clinic, where he was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis. He died a few days later. This situation was easily preventable, as the Nationals were not well equipped to handle an event like this. There was not a certified athletic trainer at the Nationals' academy, and nobody from the team tried to get him seen at a better hospital or advocate that his contract was being processed (Gordon, 2013). After his death, it was determined that he did not die from bacterial meningitis, but rather an aggressive case of sinusitis (Rojas, 2015). At the time of his death, 21 of 30 teams did not have a certified trainer at their Dominican academy. After this incident, MLB began investigating the academies to make sure they were safe and operating in a humane manner.

Guillén's story began a drastic change and improvement to the academies. The Chicago Cubs opened a new 50-acre facility in 2012 that has four fields, four batting cages, eight bullpens, a weight room, two locker rooms, and improved dining facilities and dormitories. The Colorado Rockies also recently opened a new facility that features a clubhouse, dormitories that can hold 80 players, weight room, cafeteria, entertainment room, classrooms, and multiple fields and batting cages. Other notable teams with new academies include the Padres, Pirates, Astros, Mets and Mariners. Tim Kissner, the international director for the Seattle Mariners, claims that "the upside to these kids is unbelievable… "But they don't have the coaching, the housing, the nutrition that kids we're signing out of the States do and they don't have the organized baseball" (Drysdale, 2013). The Pittsburgh Pirates have invested heavily in their Dominican academy. Pirates

Chairman Bob Nutting claims, “This [opening of a new academy] is a tangible demonstration of our desire to provide the tools and resources necessary to maximize every opportunity to find and develop quality talent. Finding and developing talent in the rich Latin American markets, as well as in other international markets, is a top priority for our club” (Latin America, n.d.) Having adequate and up-scale facilities allows prospects to have the resources necessary to become great baseball players with the possibility of being successful in the United States.

The Dominican academies are like “an Ellis Island for players from other Latin countries, funneling them into a single program and filtering players to determine if they’re good enough to be promoted to short-season teams in the United States” (Drysdale, 2013, para 3). MLB teams have invested lots of money and energy in the Dominican Republic in recent years. In the last decade, fifteen teams have constructed new academies that cost an average of $4 million. The more recent and extravagant academies cost roughly $8.5 million. Teams that have older facilities are either moving into newer facilities previously owned by another team, or they are in the process of building a state-of-the-art facility. Rafael Pérez, the MLB Director of Dominican Operations, claims, “The impact of the academies has been huge. In the Dominican Republic, 450-500 players are being signed a year, and one of the reasons for this is that each team has optimal conditions to develop them” (Rojas, 2015, para 6). In addition to developing their baseball skills, the academies also offer educational programs, such as classes on English, leadership, etiquette, and American culture (Rojas, 2015).

The statistics are not promising for Dominican players to make a viable career playing baseball, however. Bautista claims that “less than half of those signed to academy

contracts in the Dominican make it to America to play rookie ball. Only 25 percent make it to Class A. Only about 3 percent will ever take an at-bat in the Major Leagues" (Bautista, 2015, para 16). More than 75% of Latin American players will quit baseball in their first four years. In 2006, 832 Dominicans were playing for their academy team, and 45.8% made it to play rookie ball in the US. 24.8% were promoted to Class A, 10.3% made it to Double-A, 6.1% made it to Triple-A, and only 2.6% were promoted to MLB (Gordon, 2013). Thus, the probability of maintaining a professional baseball career for Latino players is slim. Frequently, players finish their baseball careers at an early age and do not have money saved for their future because they send it back to their families in the Dominican Republic so they can live comfortably. Bautista (2015) claims, "most kids from the Dominican envy even the poorest American kids. In the DR, you can't even get a job at McDonald's without a high school diploma. While the real dream is to make it to the majors, a lot of these prospects eventually realize that they're not going to get there, and then it's survival mode — stick around the minor leagues long enough and apply for U.S. citizenship, or find a regular job in the U.S. that will still allow them to send enough U.S. dollars back home to change their family's station in life" (para 24).

MLB teams acknowledge this issue, and the academies are offering educational program to its players. There are things that Westerners take for granted that young Dominican boys do not even know exist. For instance, opening a checking account is critical for prospects who may get paid large sums of money, but they come from extreme poverty and do not know the first thing about managing money. Charles Farrell, a sports diversity advocate, says, "These are 16-year-olds who potentially are going to receive millions of dollars, and the kid doesn't even know how to open a bank account"

(Gordon, 2013, para 2). For some academies, the education initiative is simple, only good enough for the prospects to survive in the United States. Other academies are offering high school diplomas for their players so they have something to fall back on in the likely case they are out of baseball at an early age. With a higher level of education, it was assumed that they could better understand instructions from coaches, while also setting up players for a life after baseball. For the Mets, baseball activities last every day until 4:00 pm, followed by three hours of classes. Twice a week players meet with a sports psychologist. Hansel Robles, currently a pitcher for the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim and former Met, graduated with a high school diploma from the academy in 2010. He says that educational programs "should definitely be something that's enforced across every teams. Just because we're so focused on trying to get that contract sometimes that some people think they need to cut classes out in order to dedicate all their time to baseball. Having that there, those classes, it makes it just a little bit easier to stick with it. You can't stress ... enough how if the baseball thing doesn't work out then you have nothing left to fall back on. Whereas if you do this, you can go to college and you can have a future" (Vorkunov, 2016, para 30). The Pittsburgh Pirates also offer a program where the prospects have the opportunity to graduate from high school while in the academy. As of 2015, the Pirates have awarded 45 players with a high school diploma (McCullough, n.d.). In the upcoming years, MLB expects more teams to instill educational initiatives in their academies. This education allows the prospects to have job opportunities when most of them fail in baseball, but it will also help them in their journey through the pipeline, specifically from English classes taught in the academy.

Bautista claims that during his time in the pipeline, he would constantly be called into the manager's office to translate a conversation between a player and coaches. He claims, "the simplest of misunderstandings would take 10 minutes to explain" (Bautista, 2015, para 29). The language barrier also has implications on the careers of Latin players. Bautista also witnessed players be too scared to see their trainer when they were injured because they were afraid that an injury would cause their release. If they played through it, their careers could end because of bad performance. Bautista also notes that if a player did not have top-tier talent, then the Latin players were usually viewed as arrogant or lazy, even if baseball was the most important thing in their lives. He is calling for education program in all 30 academies so the players can have a bright future after baseball, but also help them communicate in all stops of the minor leagues.

1.3. Haitian Oppression

Haiti has historically been a country that is unlike any in the Caribbean. In 1804, Haiti broke from France, and became a black, French and Creole speaking nation situated between American and European powers in a Spanish-speaking region (Khalid, 2016). Since the country is culturally distinctive, Haitians have also been labeled as outcasts. In the Dominican Republic, Haitians are an oppressed group and there is a national stigma against them. Haitians derive mostly from African slaves, while lighter-skinned Dominicans come from a colonial European lineage, which is seen as more prestigious. Rafael Trujillo, the former Dominican dictator, even used makeup to whiten his face, and he wanted to whiten the country as well. The oppression against Haitians in the Dominican Republic began as early as 1937 when Trujillo ordered the murder of approximately 20,000 Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans near the Haiti-Dominican

Republic border (Schoenfeld, 2017). This cast a negative light on Haitians living in or near the Dominican Republic for years.

This history of oppression has recently escalated with the passing of new legislation in the Dominican Republic. In 2010, the Dominican Republic rewrote its Constitution to revoke citizenship for children of undocumented immigrants. The changes stipulate that regardless of where one was born in the Dominican Republic, only children born to Dominican parents are eligible for citizenship, leaving approximately 200,000 people stateless, most of them Haitian. Additionally, a 2012 census on migrants found that roughly 460,000 Haitian immigrants lived in the Dominican Republic, and 61% were undocumented (Castillo, 2016). Oftentimes Haitians are so poor that they are born without a birth certificate, and the only way they can obtain their documents is to travel to Haiti, a country they have likely never been to before (Board, 2013). This marginalization has created a hostile environment for Haitians living in the Dominican Republic, who continue to struggle against a long history of hatred, racism, and discrimination.

Dominican players are also subject to control by MLB that is unique solely to them and not players from the United States. In the Dominican Republic, age and identity fraud is commonplace because those older than sixteen receive much smaller signing bonuses (Dorsey, 2015). Additionally, there is discrimination against Dominicans of Haitian origin because they are often too poor to have been born in a hospital and to hold a birth certificate. Therefore, if they are vocal about their Haitian identity, they may not get an opportunity to get signed due to their ethnicity (Davis, 2017). This is part of the reason why MLB established a Department of Investigation at their international

headquarters in Santo Domingo. Due to concerns about fraud, Dominican players are subject to DNA tests, bone scans, and a search of their school records to confirm their true identity in regards to age, nationality, and name. This form of external control is specific to Dominican players, which is a form of surveillance of MLB's neocolonialist subjects, where the prospects are dominated and controlled economically and culturally.

1.4. Main Arguments

According to Kanfer (1979), "Effective external control can operate only when surveillance is constant" (p. 233) and MLB incorporates control and surveillance into its practices in the Dominican Republic. While the academies give international players a chance to play baseball professionally and better their lives, many issues are associated with the academy system. MLB justifies their neocolonial system by claiming their practices in the Dominican Republic are altruistic, where MLB's intent is to help the players. MLB also used the American dream as a form of enticement. This covers up insufficient education programs, and warrants fingerprinting and other medical tests as forms of surveillance over prospects. These are all demonstrations of external control used by MLB to monitor its players, through neocolonialist practices. Through this extensive control, the Dominican academy system is dominated by MLB, like an empire over a colony. Through a neocolonialism lens, this study will help shed light on how MLB justifies the academy system in which players are exploited to benefit MLB and its clubs.

This project is a postcolonial critique of MLB's academy system that aims to reveal the problems of the system. As Loomba (2007) explains, postcolonial theory is concerned with the historical and cultural legacy of imperial domination in formerly

colonized nations. Accordingly, this thesis will analyze how MLB exercises forms of dominance over prospects in the MLB academy system that reflect the continuing aftermath of colonial control in the Dominican Republic. In this thesis, the main questions I hope to answer are: "How does MLB's academy system illustrate the operations of neocolonial power in sport?" What does a critique of this system add to current understandings in rhetoric of sport studies surrounding how athletes are controlled and dominated by elite sporting institutions, particularly on a global stage?" This thesis answers these questions by providing evidence of how MLB dominates and controls its Dominican prospects by holding up an insufficient education system as a sign of the league's altruism, by subjecting prospects to forms of control (surveillance, medical testing) justified around suspicion of their foreign identity, and by using the American dream as a form of enticement into the academy system for foreign-born prospects.

I primarily analyze internal discourse produced by MLB in defense of the academy system in order to focus on the league's justifications for controlling its foreign-born prospects. Specifically, I analyze the league's altruistic claims related to academy education programs, its justifications for surveillance and medical testing, and its use of the myth of the American dream to entice prospects to enter the academy system. In Chapter 1 I review the MLB academy system. In Chapter 2 I summarize colonialism, postcolonialism, neocolonialism, and altruism as critical frames. Chapter 3 provides a background on Dominican baseball and how Haitian-Dominicans are often blocked from entering the academy system, or subject to characteristically neocolonial forms of control – medical testing, surveillance – as a condition of their participation. Chapter 4 analyzes

MLB's justifications for the academy system within postcolonial and neocolonial frameworks. Here I include my own experiences in the academies as an intern in the Department of Education, where I taught classes on American culture to prospects and observed the classes that are taught regularly, as further evidence for how the academies are characterized by neocolonial forms of control.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Colonialism

According to Loomba (2007) colonialism is *"*a settlement in a new country … a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state" (p. 7). It is mainly "the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (p. 8) and colonizers found "colonialist governments to oversee the efficient operation of property and labor" (Buescher & Ono, 1996, p. 255; Billings & Black, 2018, p. 36). Billings & Black (2018) describe colonialism as "the bonds of land, labor, and the bodily use/abuse between dominant publics [empires] and subaltern groups [typically, colonies] (p. 36). Coloniality is based on the ''long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations'' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243; Enck-Wanzer, 2011, p. 365). The goal is to bring resources back to the *metropol*, or center of the empire (Billings & Black, 2018, p. 36). Sibley (1996) discusses postmodern colonialism, and argues that "control of land or political organization or nation-states is less important than power over consciousness and consumption, which are much more efficient forms of domination" (p. 219). MLB exercises such power over prospects' consciousness by enticing them with the promises of the American dream and by enculturating them through the academies' educational programs, which include English-language training and instruction on how to integrate into American culture. MLB depends upon the Dominican Republic to produce cheap, foreign players as productive labor investments that the league can control economically and culturally.

2.2. Postcolonialism

Loomba (2007) concludes that it is useful to think of postcolonialism studies as an "imperialism or neo-imperialism as the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and control. Its result, or what happens in the colonies as a consequence of imperial domination, is colonialism or neo-colonialism. Thus, the imperial country is the 'metropol' from which power flows, and the colony or neo-colony is the place which it penetrates and controls. Imperialism can function without formal colonies [as in United States imperialism today] but colonialism cannot" (Loomba, 2007, pp. 11-12)." In terms of baseball, MLB holds power over Dominican baseball players through the academy system. Essentially, colonization acts as a mechanism of control over a country and its people and the relationship between a settler-colonial country is characterized by domination (Couthard, 2014; p. 38; Billings & Black, 2018, p. 38). The United States has colonized many countries and territories in Latin America, including the Dominican Republic. Baseball in the Dominican Republic is under direct influence from the United States, as MLB has a headquarters in Santo Domingo and each team has an academy in which they operate. With most forms of colonization, a country takes a country over territorially, distributes resources, exploits labor, and the colonizing country leaves a significant cultural imprint in the colonized country (Loomba, 2007). The Dominican Republic has been colonized by Major League Baseball as a country that develops cheap labor with the goal of shipping the best players to play professionally in the United States.

Shome (1996) argues that postcolonialism "primarily challenges the colonizing and imperialistic tendencies manifest in discursive practices of 'first world' countries in

their constructions and representations of the subjects of 'third world' countries and/or racially oppressed peoples of the world" (p. 42). This is applicable to the Dominican academies because a first world country is dominating a third world country, essentially colonizing the academy system. Loomba (2007) notes that "'post' complicates matters because it implies an 'aftermath' in two senses—temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting. It is the second implication which critics of the term have found contestable: if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism" (p. 12). Postcolonialism is rooted in colonialism, as a postcolonial approach intends to understand current issues in developing countries "through a retrospective reflection on colonialism" (Said, 1978, p. 45). Shome & Hedge (2002) further describes postcolonialism studies "an interdisciplinary field of inquiry committed to theorizing the problematics of colonization and decolonization" (p. 250) and provides a historical and global depth of understanding of cultural power differences. A postcolonial approach also investigates additional forms of power, including inequities around race, sexuality, culture, and class (Shome & Hedge, 2002).

2.3. Neocolonialism

After colonialism occurs, the changing of the subordinate country's culture is known as neocolonialism. Neocolonialism includes the "rationalizations of colonialism that involve the symbolic, as both a precursor and extension of the material realm" (Black, 2012, p. 23; Sibley, 1997; Billings & Black, 2018, p. 37). Billings and Black (2018) argue that under neocolonial control a nation's "representations and narratives, their historical characteristics and contemporary lifeways, their ethos and morality, their appearance and intelligence, and their usefulness or uselessness [to a dominant public]

are all managed by forces operating outside that culture" (p. 37). Through this perspective, it can be concluded that MLB's activities in the Dominican Republic are neocolonial, as the US has shaped how foreign-born baseball prospects are located, trained, and made useful to American franchises.

As with the case of the Dominican academies, Western perceptions have traveled to colonized countries, such that "modernizing" these countries are a fundamental action of postcolonialism. Furthermore, Clevenger (2017) asserts, "Modernity's 'coloniality of power' is the reproduction of the relations of power established through the systematic repression of Eurocentered imperial conquest through the imposition of the social classifications of race and gender in order to organize colonized world peoples" (p. 595). Sport, modernity and colonialism are sites "that might prove to be the consummate example of work in the [post-] postmodernist era' in the sense of illuminating [but not decentering] the significance of sport with the social realms of global societies" (Bass, 2014, p. 172; Clevenger, 2017, p. 590). This is exemplified through the ways MLB has colonized the Dominican Republic: each team operates mostly modern academies, where they are bringing American culture to the island via baseball. Inside the academies, the teams educate players on English, American culture, basic life skills, and even provide them the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. The construction of these state of the art academies are examples of postcolonialism in the Dominican Republic via sport.

The MLB academies illustrate how neocolonialism is "a continuation of western colonialism without the traditional mechanism of expanding frontiers and territorial control but with elements of political, economic and cultural control" (Banarjee & Linstead, 2004, p. 227). MLB has expanded its operations to the Dominican Republic,

where there is a Department of Investigations to oversee its foreign prospects. Also, the Dominican academy system demonstrates neocolonialism because of its control over the players with its education system, and medical testing as a form of surveillance. Neocolonialism is prominent in the Dominican Republic because of MLB's physical presence on the island with its international headquarters and each team's academy.

For neocolonialism to occur, there must be a history of past successful colonialism (Buescher & Ono, 1996), which the United States has exhibited in the Dominican Republic previously. Between 1870 and 1900, Americans became the most powerful international influence in the Dominican Republic because they invested heavily in the sugar industry. The United States also invaded the country in the early 20th century, further colonizing the Dominican Republic (Klein, 1991). America has colonized the Dominican Republic to where it is essentially an extension of the United States, so much so that Klein (1991) argues, "No other country dominates the Dominican Republic as much as the United States" (p. 108). Neocolonialism also "employs contemporary ideological and economic strategies to make racism, genocide, sexism, nationalism, and inequitable capital distribution appear necessary. Neocolonialism pretends to offer a kinder version of present global economics than past colonialism; hence, its presence may at times be quite subtle" (Buescher & Ono, 1996, p. 255).

Education within the academy system is an example of the "kinder version" of domination that characterizes neocolonialism. The academies that participate in offering diplomas are the New York Mets, Arizona Diamondbacks, Pittsburgh Pirates, Detroit Tigers, Philadelphia Phillies, and Seattle Mariners (Vorkunov, 2016). Even if a player is cut from the academy, some teams will still let them work to obtain a high school

diploma. MLB also sometimes funds released players that pays for "all or some vocational training, English classes, and college" (Vorkunov, 2016, para 7). The Mets were the first team to implement education in the academies in 2006 because they thought that education would help develop Latino players. Education within the academies is a self-serving act by MLB that further illustrates its dominance in the Dominican Republic.

As Anguiano et al. (2011) argue, the "relationship of the United States to Latin America, has been marked by colonialism, military adventurism, expansionism, manifest destiny, and economic neocolonialism, and to Latino/a immigrants as marginalized and the exploited source of cheap labor" (p. 105). Dominican prospects are indeed signed as a form of cheap labor, with MLB hoping a few will become the next Dominican star player. As previously mentioned, an MLB team could invest $100,000 in four domestic players or twenty Dominican players (Bretón & Villegas, 1999). In the academy system, there is discrimination, yet MLB justifies the system because it is the only way out of poverty for most prospects. MLB claims that its inadequate education system within the academy is to help the players in their post-baseball lives. Rather, it is self-serving to MLB because the education system is in place to teach them to learn, which will help them on the baseball diamond (Baxter, 2006).

Scholars have previously written about the connection between baseball in the Dominican Republic and neocolonialism by MLB. First, they have argued that the United States invested in Latin America, specifically the Dominican Republic, because of its laissez-faire business practices. Labor relations were subjective, and there were no laws regarding child labor. The country was, and still is, extremely poor, so the players would

be eager to have the opportunity to pursue baseball as a career to escape poverty (Regalado, 2000). Major League Baseball's academy system was established in 1977 by the Toronto Blue Jays (Klein, 2014). Since MLB has been a stable figure since then, the neocolonialist imprint has strengthened. Klein (2008), acknowledges MLB's neocolonialist practices and determines, "In its growing dependence on foreign [mostly Latin American] talent, Major League Baseball [MLB] has assumed that the norms and rules governing its dealings with players in the United States should be unilaterally adopted around the globe" (p. 122). Klein (1989) also writes, "The underdevelopment of baseball in the D.R. is not intended. It is systemic, the result of political and economic imperatives operating in the U.S.", while also making the Dominican Republic 'dependent on the US'" (p. 96).

The Dominican Republic relies on the United States in relation of unequal, but reciprocal compensation. The Dominican Republic is an underdeveloped nation, while the United States is developed. Therefore, "The core nation expropriates the colony's resources and imports them for processing and manufacture. Finished products are consumed in the home market as well as reexported to the colony" (Ottenson, 2014, p. 768). Dominican players are signed as resources, then refined and shipped to the United States, which is the colony. The relationship between these two countries is meaningful because it is a "system that requires the colony to compensate MLB teams, which represent the colonial power (the United States), would only reinforce such a relationship" (Ottenson, 2014, p. 773). MLB is reliant on Dominican players as a form of cheap labor, who can turn out to be productive, low-cost investments.

The neocolonialism literature determines that Western colonialism expands and controls one's economy and culture, and this is true for Dominican baseball. For example, MLB concluded that 30% of the players' salaries go directly back to the Dominican economy (Lebrón, 2016). Additionally, Ruck (2011) claims that some of the signing bonuses handed to players are enough money to pay off the towns they live in. Therefore, the Dominican Republic relies on MLB for its economic successes. As for MLB's controlling of Dominican culture, baseball has impacted the education system, as many children do not attend school past the sixth grade to pursue a career in baseball. As previously mentioned, the Dominican Republic has the highest dropout rate in Latin America, where only 60% of children attend high school, and only 20% of the population has a high school diploma (McCullough, n.d.; Klein, 2014). To escape poverty may mean sacrificing an education. Klein (1995) argues that an "Escape from poverty, however, is not the only way in which the game becomes culturally loaded. Baseball is also a means of culturally confronting North American economic and cultural domination" (p. 123). Thus, the Dominican Republic needs MLB for wealth, but also to resist American hegemony in the Caribbean.

While postcolonialism and neocolonialism have negative connotations, some scholars argue that these forms of control have brought positive benefits to "most regions of the world, and that [their] enlightenment objectives were largely informed by altruism" (D'Souza, 2002; Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006, p. 250). These partial but inequitable benefits represent the complexities of power in hegemonic systems. In the case of the academies, MLB benefits from the labor of Dominican prospects, but these prospects can pursue wealth in the US that is not possible in the Dominican Republic. This is one of the

main reasons that the American dream serves as such a powerful construction of what can be accomplished through baseball. Even though the prospects are controlled significantly through MLB, they still partially benefit from the way the academy system is constructed.

MLB's neocolonialist traditions in the Dominican Republic can be portrayed as altruism because MLB is giving prospects a chance to pursue the American dream. *Sugarball* by Alan Klein (1991) highlights this enticement by positing,

> "For people in a nation subject to neocolonialism, the cultural institutions of a country as powerful and wealthy as the United States hold a special allure, the promise to the colonized of an escape from their dependent status. The colonized consume a wide range of the products of the colonizers; they subscribe to the ideology of upward mobility and have the illusion that they can change their status. Thus, culture can promote domination by offering the promise of empowerment without change. The desire for the culture and institutions of the foreign elite [in this case the American elite] rests on two pillars of the social psychology of the dominated: veneration for the foreigner [colonizer, ruling elite, or multinational corporation] and cultural self-loathing, or what Fanon referred to as colonial self-hatred. Of course the willingness of a colonized and subordinate class to take on the ideology and culture of the ruling class leads to the impoverishment of their own culture" (p. 106).

Therefore, MLB may not see anything wrong with their exploitation practices because of the slim chances that Dominican players will succeed in professional baseball.

2.4. Whiteness

While scholars have written about baseball and neocolonialism, rhetoric and sport scholarship have also focused on race and baseball, including whiteness and labor inequalities. Baseball embraces "hierarchies of individualism, innovation, tenacity, and masculinity, as well as whiteness" (Von Burg & Johnson, 2009, p. 356; Butterworth, 2007). Baseball's mythos has been developed historically around white heroes (Hughes, 2004; Butterworth, 2007). Whiteness is reaffirmed in the demographics of MLB, where Latino players made up 31.9% of MLB in 2017, and players of color made up 42.5% of MLB. Of the minority players, only 7.7% are African American, and the majority are dark skinned Latinos (Lapchick, 2017). Most importantly, whiteness is a place of privilege and is unnoticed until it is violated by the "Other," which is anyone who does not perform the traditional role of whiteness (Dyer, 1997, p. 1; Butterworth, 2007). Thus, Latin American baseball players are not in a position of privilege because they are in violation of the "Other."

This predominant whiteness has affected players of color in MLB, including how they are labeled. Butterworth (2007) describes these differences as they affected the 1998 home run race between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa. Both were elite sluggers of their generation, but they were described differently based on their race. The media portrayed McGwire to be a mythic hero because of his whiteness. McGwire is a white American from California, and Sammy Sosa is a black man from the Dominican Republic. During their home run chase, McGwire was consistently described by his strength through statistical measures. One writer described McGwire as a "mountainous man, six feet, five inches and 245 lb'' (Levin, 1998, p. 47; Butterworth, 2007, p. 234).

Even *Time* magazine labeled McGwire as the "Hero of the Year" in 1998. Other comments made by reporters make similar mythical claims about McGwire. Butterworth (2007) even concludes, "the view of McGwire in mythical terms reinforced an American need to celebrate size and strength, and to do so at the expense of competing images" (p. 235).

Sosa never received attention as a mythical figure. Instead most of the comments made were about his Dominican heritage that reinforced Latino and dark-skinned stereotypes, while also portraying him as an intruder in the way of McGwire's record. For example, *USA Today* conducted a poll to see who fans wanted to win the race. Only 16% voted for Sosa, while 79% voted for McGwire (Keown, 1998a, p. B1; Butterworth, 2007, pp. 235-236). Sosa was also described within the larger Latino stereotype of being "selfish" and "hot-tempered" (Regalado, 1998; Butterworth, 2007, p. 237). While McGwire was consistently labeled a hero, Sosa was described as ''a Dominican who rose from poverty'' (Keown, 1998b, p. E1; Butterworth, 2007, p. 237). The home run race between McGwire and Sosa portrays white American baseball players as heroes, while Latinos are viewed more by their heritage. My study can shed light on racial inequities like those that shaped the 1998 home run race, by focusing on the MLB pipeline. Butterworth's essay "Race in 'the Race'" represents a rare focus on Dominican racial and national stereotypes in rhetoric of sport studies. For the most part rhetorical studies of sport and race, including those focused on baseball, have critiqued racial representations and labor inequities related to African American players.

The types of racial marginalization that Butterworth discusses have an impact on the MLB academy system, especially on perceptions of those players of color who

successfully emerge from the system. Haitian-Dominicans, tend to be darker than the average Dominican, and those who tend to be darker-skinned face higher levels of discrimination than lighter-skinned Latinos (Araujo-Dawson, 2015). The marginalization is so prominent, that only one MLB player (Miguel Sanó) identifies as Haitian. It is believed that many other success MLB players are Haitian-Dominicans, but they have never publicly identified as so. This shows the significance of racism towards Haitian-Dominican players. Butterworth (2007) found that Sosa was consistently discussed as an immigrant escaping poverty, rather than a great, strong, heroic baseball player like McGwire. Sosa is a representation of Dominican baseball players who are described by their background and not their performance. Sosa is actually a dark-skinned Haitian-Dominican, but he keeps his identity and personal life quiet. In a possible concession to the whiteness that predominates sport and celebrity cultures, Sosa began using a cream to bleach his skin after he retired (Matney, 2017).

While Dominican prospects are not seen as positively heroic like American players, the American dream and American exceptionalism attract them to pursue baseball as a vehicle for a better life. The myth of American exceptionalism maintains that the United States is a "chosen nation endowed with a special ability to spread freedom and democracy throughout the world" (Butterworth, 2010, p. 12), and this attracts people who believe the United States is a land of abundant opportunities where race is no barrier to success. Butterworth summarizes common idealizations of baseball and the American dream, writing "How could an institution that grants equal opportunity on the field, and unites people from across all walks of life in the stands, be anything other than an exemplar of the American dream?" (p. 74) In reality, baseball has been

racially exclusive throughout its history. For example, the Negro Leagues were founded because African Americans were not welcomed into the game, and neither was Jackie Robinson, who faced countless racial barriers in his pursuit of playing in MLB. The idea of baseball as a representation of America is only accurate if we account for it leaving out many individuals who pursue the American dream (Butterworth, 2010).

These studies remain important, as African American representation and equality in baseball are ongoing problems. As of 2017, only 7.7% (58 players) of African Americans or African Canadians make up MLB, the lowest percentage since MLB began tracking racial demographics in 1991. At the beginning of the 2018 MLB, 86.7% of MLB managers were white, with only 4 minority managers. Three are Latino (Alex Cora of the Boston Red Sox, Dave Martinez of the Washington Nationals, and Rick Renteria of the Chicago White Sox). Dave Roberts, who manages the Los Angeles Dodgers, is African American and Japanese (Reid, 2018). These statistics show the importance of whiteness in MLB.

People of color have been historically discriminated against in baseball, especially through labor inequalities. Curt Flood was a black baseball player for the St. Louis Cardinals who helped to eliminate the reserve clause in baseball, which meant a player was required to play for their team unless traded, and teams "reserved" the right to sign players for the next season. He was coined "the best center fielder in baseball" by Sports Illustrated in 1968 (Khan, 2011, p. 21). After a ten year career in St. Louis, he was traded to the Philadelphia Phillies in 1969, but he did not want to play for them after his contract expired because he experienced racism in Philadelphia. However, all players had to abide by the "reserve clause," which meant a player was mandated to work for their team

unless traded, and teams "reserved" the right to sign players for the next season. This system preceded modern-day free agency, where a player can choose what team he wants to play for. In the 1960s, a player had two options: either negotiate a contract with the same team or asked to be traded or released. If a contract was not signed, then the player would not play that season.

Flood did not sign with the Phillies, but instead sued MLB in federal court and argued that the owners practiced collusion to limit wages and control careers, a condition he compared to slavery. He called himself a "well-paid slave" (Khan, 2011, p. 23) and contended that the reserve clause violated U.S. antitrust laws and the Thirteenth amendment, which prohibits involuntary servitude. Flood lost his federal case in 1970 and again on a Supreme Court appeal in 1972. This case may not have been as important if it happened to an average player, but Flood was an all-star center fielder with two World Series championships on his resume. After losing the cases, he took a year off and then signed with the Washington Senators, but they ultimately released him (Khan, 2011).

While the system failed Flood at the time, he paved the way for players to experience free agency, and was an important activist for black players in particular. The case of Curt Flood shows how race and labor relations have been important in MLB, but academic literature has focused primarily on African American players and not Latino players. Unlike black players, Latinos have to deal with the "additional trauma of acculturation" (Regalado, 1998, p. 3). They are coming to the United States where they must face a language and cultural barrier. Many must deal with acculturation in small towns or cities where they begin their minor league careers, such as Michigan City,

Indiana, Elmira, New York, Yakima, Washington, and countless other places. Many of these small towns where the American minor league system begins are predominantly white, isolated areas, further singling out Latino players. Latinos have to overcome living in areas where they are unable to communicate, while also confronting racism. The pipeline is difficult for Latino players, but their baseball journey embodies "the Latin virtues of individualism, personal honor, and integrity" (Regalado, 1998, p. 3).

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT OF DOMINICAN BASEBALL

MLB is a large entity that operates mainly in the United States, but it also has its international headquarters in the Dominican Republic. MLB's academy system exists within and also contributes to the colonial relationship between the US and the Dominican Republic. Each MLB team has an operating academy, where teams sign and train players with the goal of preparing them to play in the United States. Since MLB's influence is heavy in the Dominican Republic, Dominican players are aware of success stories of friends and relatives that sign a professional contract, so they feel as if playing professional baseball is a realistic goal (Klein, 1989). While this applies to Dominicans, the same cannot be said for Haitians. Haitian-Dominican players uniquely illustrate neocolonialism in the Dominican academy system because they are under disciplinary control, with fingerprinting, bone scans, and DNA tests all serving as forms of surveillance. Buescher & Ono (1996) argue that neocolonialism employs strategies to make racism and other forms of discrimination seem necessary. These processes of discipline and surveillance by MLB are presumably necessary forms of discrimination against Haitian-Dominican players due to suspicions about the authenticity of their foreign identities.

3.1. Haitian-Dominican Players

Many players of Haitian descent alter their identity to have the opportunity to be signed to a professional contract by changing their names if their name sounds too Haitian. This deception helps the players avoid issues that many Haitian players have dealt with. It also leaves many Haitian prospects, however, without the documentation needed to sign a contract, as they have fraudulent paperwork and identities. Haitian

prospects' families may also be so poverty-stricken that they do not have access to government representatives to request documents, so their identities are stolen or made up (Davis, 2017). Thus, the age and identity of Haitian prospects are often called into question by MLB, and they are subject to DNA tests, bone tests, and school records retrievals, in greater numbers than other foreign-born players (Wetmore, 2015). For these reasons are why Haitian-Dominicans typically do not reveal their national identity to major league clubs.

Former All-Star and American League MVP Miguel Tejada is an illustration of how foreign-born prospects coming through the Dominican academy system are subject to suspicion. During an interview in 2008, a reporter brought up that Tejada's birth certificate listed him as two years older than Tejada himself had claimed. While Tejada abruptly left the interview, he later claimed that the accusation was true, saying "I was just a poor kid. I wanted to sign a professional contract, and that was the only way to do it. I didn't want or mean to do anything wrong" (Tejada Admits to Being Two Years Older, 2008, para 8; Gilbert, 2013, p. 130). It is not known if Tejada is a Haitian-Dominican, but this story shows that players will do whatever is necessary to sign a contract, as they have nothing to lose.

These injustices are prominent during the signing process, where most of the inequity occurs. This includes teams not signing Haitian players because they are a liability due to their stereotypes for having fraudulent paperwork. MLB officials often assume that Haitian-Dominicans are poor and were not born in hospitals, resulting in an image that they do not have birth certificates or other documents necessary to submit to MLB when signed by an MLB team. This marginalization has forced Haitian-

Dominicans to struggle with the process of becoming a professional baseball player because they are suspected of wrongdoing based on their race and national status. They oftentimes cover up their identity to avoid such issues, such as changing their names to avoid any hint of being Haitian.

Miguel Sanó and Estevan Florial are two prominent Haitian-Dominican players who represent the prevalence of discrimination that these players face in the signing process. Both players have faced marginalization in their lives, specifically poverty and living with a Haitian identity, while also overcoming age fraud and identity issues during the signing process. Sanó is currently a third baseman and designated hitter for the Minnesota Twins, while Florial is playing in the New York Yankees organization in Low A ball, four levels below the major leagues. Sanó is the only player in MLB who acknowledges his Haitian identity, which makes his story a significant representation of race and labor inequities connection in sport. Their stories demonstrate how there is a process of discrimination that is present in the Dominican Republic, where Haitians are excluded from entering the pipeline based on stereotypes of fraud.

3.2. Buscónes

For a player to be signed with an MLB team, they must first agree to train with a buscón, which is especially difficult for Haitian prospects. The buscónes are a major part of the pipeline system because they are responsible for getting players to develop their skills enough to be attractive to MLB teams. They also provide housing, food, and medical attention, and arrange tryouts with clubs. In exchange for being a guardian for 3-5 years, the buscónes can take anywhere from 25-50% of the players' signing bonus (Gregory, 2010). Since taking care of the prospects for years costs thousands of dollars,

the only way they can make this money back is by taking a significant portion of a player's signing bonus, which is good for both the player and the buscón, as they depend on each other for financial security. However, the buscónes tend to not associate with prospects of Haitian descent, as these prospects are seen as a liability because the future contract signed may not be validated due to insufficient documentation (Schoenfeld, 2017). The long-term investment that is placed in the players may be wasted if a Haitian player is signed, and as a result many buscónes will avoid Haitian players. Suspicion against Haitian players begins even before they are signed into the academy system, as they are stereotyped as lying about their age and identity. These stereotypes cause both buscónes and teams to be skeptical of pursuing Haitian-Dominican prospects. It takes a lot for Haitian-Dominicans to be signed by a team, let alone make it all the way to MLB. One American League executive said, "We have always had problems with Haitians in the Dominican Republic as they are usually document deficient for age and ID purposes" (Arangure, 2013, para 20). Former New York Mets General Manager and Vice President of MLB once claimed, "I wouldn't say that intended consequences were to leave a specific group of people outside the benefits of that [buscónes] process. But in essence, that's what has happened" (Racism Blocks Haitians, n.d., para 7). Even it Haitian-Dominicans are honest with MLB, they still have difficulties being trusted.

MLB has a system in place to exclude Haitian-Dominican players from attending team academies, and therefore, the larger pipeline system that supplies MLB with foreign-born players. Three prominent coaches at a training center in the Dominican Republic, said they were recently obliged to send away multiple talented baseball prospects because MLB did not want to evaluate them. One coach claimed, "Last week I

had to send away four, due to that when I wanted to introduce them to several scouts, they refused to see them, and when asked for a reason they told me that unfortunately, they were not allowed to see Haitian-Dominican players" (Calcattera, 2010, para 3). Another coach at the training center denied the request of a tryout for two Haitian pitchers who threw 91 mph for their identity. "They are guys with good physiques, holding passports and Haitian birth certificates, but the scouts told me they don't see them because the investigators from the MLB office here will not allow any Haitian players through… It is unfair that the young men of that neighboring country are denied the opportunity given to Cubans and Venezuelans, who are signed without investigation" (Calcattera, 2010, para 3). Therefore, the coaches claim that MLB is responsible for discriminating against Haitian-Dominican players.

At the start of the 2017 MLB season, 10.7% of the league was Dominican (MLB Opens Season With Record Percentage, 2017). These statistics do not account for Dominicans who are of Haitian descent, especially because these players avoid identifying as Haitian due to their long history of stigmatization. Out of the 10.7%, which equates to 82 players in total, only Miguel Sanó identifies publicly as Haitian-Dominican (Davis, 2017). He is the only player to openly claim his identity because of the oppression that Haitians face, which oftentimes hinders their chances of becoming an MLB player. The players' true identities are often hidden from scouts and trainers because they do not want to run the risk of being labeled a liability due to common fraud issues with Haitians. Documentation that Haitian prospects submit to MLB when signing with a team is assumed to be fraudulent, so these players are subject to DNA tests, bone scans, and a review of school records that is not required for other players.

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF NEOCOLONIALISM IN THE DOMINICAN ACADEMIES

In the Summer of 2014, I was fortunate to intern with MLB's Department of Education based in Santo Domingo. There were many problematic things that I noticed during my time there, starting with the quality of the academies themselves. Some academies, like the ones run by the Pittsburgh Pirates and Colorado Rockies, resembled resorts rather than large baseball dormitories. These academies had brand new facilities and areas for ping pong and other games. The Rockies had a pool that the prospects could use when all baseball and education activities were over. On the other hand, there were still a few original academies operating in an area known as Baseball City. These were extremely old and run down, with only one room for all the prospects to sleep in. The worst academy I visited was the Miami Marlins. The living conditions were extremely bad, and the cafeteria would have failed all US health standards. I saw rats, flies, and other types of bugs there. Thus, there were and still stark contrasts between the living conditions in the academies.

I also saw differences in education within the academies. For example, the Pirates, Rockies, Toronto Blue Jays and Houston Astros all provided good education and staffed well-trained instructors. These teams offered high school diplomas to prospects who wished to pursue a formal education, and also taught them how to thrive in the US. They taught banking, English, and even topics such as sex education. The Blue Jays taught the prospects about the cities in the pipeline where minor league affiliates are located, such as Vancouver, including ways to save money when playing there. Topics like this are useful to the players, however they were taught solely in English. I remember

asking my supervisor about why the prospects were not taught in Spanish, and she said that MLB wants them to be scared about not learning English. If the lessons were taught in English, then the players would have an investment in learning the language.

Even though the education that the academies deliver is potentially useful, it is not beneficial if the prospects do not understand the content. The imposition of English-language learning as a fear-based motivation for success is one of the more subtle forms of neocolonial control at the academies. I also saw extremely insufficient education practices in the academies, especially at the more run-down academies like those run by the Miami Marlins and Chicago White Sox. The education at these academies was ineffective; I observed them on multiple occasions, for example, playing "Simon says" to learn the words for different parts of the body. Courses were also taught at night, when prospects were tired and disengaged.

Under neocolonial systems, subordinate countries refine and ships product to dominating countries in an inequitable but reciprocal relationship. Accordingly, the Dominican Republic's baseball system is completely dependent on the United States to export talent. In turn, MLB is reliant on Latin American players (who themselves need the opportunities provided by MLB to escape poverty). There are many issues that arise in this relationship. First, the practice of educating players in the academies is a control mechanism, but MLB does not acknowledge this. Rather, MLB claims altruism, arguing that its clubs are helping prospects to have better opportunities for the future. When prospects are signed, they are educated to comply with American culture and sometimes offered the opportunity to obtain a high school diploma, both of which are actually a control mechanism instituted by MLB. MLB representatives have claimed that education

in the academies primarily exists to teach the prospects how to learn, which will help their play on the field. A secondary benefit of education is that it can help players once they are released from their contract, as they will have education to fall back on (Baxter, 2006; Dale, 2017). Second, prospects are controlled by undergoing medical testing as a form of surveillance, where they are fingerprinted, and subject to DNA and bone scans to determine their true age and identity. This applies mainly to Haitian-Dominican players, but MLB concluded that this system benefits the players, another altruistic claim. Lastly, the American dream is communicated by MLB to entice players to pursue baseball, even though they are sacrificing education in their home countries to do so. The academy system is structurally neocolonial, and there have been statements made by MLB and team executives, both explicitly and implicitly, that represent US domination in the Dominican Republic.

4.1. Insufficient Education

The academies are critical to the success of the prospects, not only to hone their baseball skills, but also for education. MLB has a section for “academies” on its website, where it suggests:

> “While the primary focus remains preparing these players for professional careers, the academies, often in partnership with the MLB's central office in the Dominican Republic, have implemented education-based programs that also help prepare prospects for life after their playing careers have ended. The academies offer courses in English language, and players also participate in programs that help them adjust to life as a professional ball-player” (Academies, n.d.).

Most players do not have higher than a sixth-grade education, so educating prospects through the academy system can, in fact, benefit them on the baseball field, and also when they are cut and their baseball careers are over. For example, the New York Mets spend up to twelve hours a week in the classroom, and the players have the opportunity to get a high school diploma, even if they are released from their contract. Even though many players quit school at an early age to pursue baseball, only 5% of signed Dominicans (at most) make it to MLB. Thus, education is critical for all players, as critical thinking will translate from the classroom to the baseball field (Dale, 2017). Since prospects in the academies range from 16 to 18 years old, they must learn cultural customs that are practiced in the United States, along with basic knowledge of English. The academies teach English, and make sure the players are aware of punctuality because "island time" can impact one's career in the United States (Klein, 2014). The academy's main goal is to produce MLB talent, but it also provides education for those that will not play baseball as a career. But, most academies do not provide sufficient education. Hanlon (2013) concludes that,

> "Baseball is a lifestyle at MLB academies. A typical day starts with breakfast at 6 a.m., followed by fielding and hitting practice, games against other academies, lunch, a workout in the gym, then more hitting practice in the batting cage, dinner, English classes, and a 10 o'clock curfew. With so little time devoted to education, and with that time being restricted to learning English and American culture, players are left with no guidance or life skills to survive in the Dominican if and when their dream of playing in the United States dies" (p. 241).

Even though education is in place in the academies, it does not often benefit the players in a meaningful way.

Klein (2014) claims there are two goals of the academies. The main goal is to produce major league talent, and the academies are designed to help a player adapt to the life of an MLB player, which is why some of the newer academies are extremely lavish. To help them adapt to US culture, there is an educational curriculum that the prospects go through. The average education level for players in the academies are less than an eighth-grade education, and 80% of the DR does not have a high school diploma, which is a reason why baseball is so important. Prospects are taught to possess a level of cultural and psychological awareness that will prepare them for the US. Academies teach English, and make sure the players learn punctuality in order to meet American workplace expectations. Classes also include dinner etiquette, grocery shopping, and banking. Education like this helps to prevent cross-cultural incidents, including a story from 2005 where a group of Cardinal minor leaguers were consistently late to team events because they would not get changed in their hotel room beneath the “security cameras” that were smoke detectors (Baxter, 2006). This incident is an example of the extreme contrast between cultures, and education in the academies is intended to alleviate situations like this.

In 2005, the Cleveland Indians had the idea that language acquisition for Dominican rookies would advance their education, while helping them to become more successful players who could speak English in the clubhouse and on the field (Klein, 2014). Ross Atkins, the former Director of Latin American Operations for the Cleveland Indians and current General Manager of the Toronto Blue Jays, claimed in 2006 that "It's

a nice byproduct that we graduate Dominicans from high school, but our focus is to make more complete baseball players. Their ability to learn is crucial in their development as a baseball player. And a secondary benefit is that they have something in life beyond baseball should baseball not work out" (Baxter, 2006, para 13). Rafael Perez, the head of MLB operations in the Dominican Republic, echoed this same claim by saying, “Critical thinking is the essence to any athlete. You have to have the ability to make decisions in the split of a second” (Dale, 2017, para 15). Perez justifies this education by saying that critical thinking is important to all athletes, and Dominican players are no different. This mentality demonstrates that MLB’s true goal is to not help prospects get acclimated to US culture, but rather to control the players and their development. MLB also acknowledges that education teaches one to learn, by stating, “First, MLB-DR and Club representatives endeavored to be proactive in sparking prospects' interest to learn by using methods that actively engage the players, showing them how to learn and increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem” (Education Initiative, n.d., para 5). MLB confronts its controlling practices within a statement of altruism, as the education system is implied to benefit the players, not MLB. Rafael Perez, Director of Dominican Operations for MLB, said, “Our main priority is to ensure that all Dominican players are not only prepared for life on-field, but also they are prepared for life after baseball” (Education Initiative, n.d., para 7).

4.2. Medical Testing and Discrimination

MLB founded a Department of Investigations in the Dominican Republic in 2008. According to former MLB commissioner Allan “Bud” Selig, the role of this department is to “protect the integrity of our sport” (Holden, 2018, para 5). Its roles additionally

include investigating allegations related to performance-enhancing substances, gambling, domestic violence, off-field misconduct, and other violations of baseball rules and policies. This department also conducts witness interviews throughout the United States and internationally to help solves these issues. They write detailed investigative reports, interview summaries, and referrals related to significant investigations (Holden, 2018). However, there is no acknowledgement of performing DNA tests or bone scans to confirm suspected players' identities. When I interned with MLB, the Department of Investigations was right next to the Department of Education, where I spent most mornings before going to the academies in the afternoon. I saw which players investigators were interviewing, and almost all of them were Haitians suspected of age fraud. I recall countless interrogations of the suspected players and their families, and I do not remember MLB investigating players for anything other than age and identity fraud. Even though MLB claims it investigates gambling, domestic violence, and other violations, their main goal is to investigate nationality-based suspicions about age and identity. This is never mentioned anywhere in MLB's public statements about the academies.

It has been established that there is age and identity fraud in the Dominican Republic, and MLB performs medical tests, including fingerprinting and bone scans to determine age. Here MLB exercises control by aligning culturally-reinforced suspicions around identity fraud with the league's protection of its own business interests, a neocolonial exercise of power that makes racially-targeted suspicion seem necessary, and that is made possible by relations between the US and the Dominican Republic. It is illegal for companies based in the US to ask an employee, potential employee, of family

of employees for a sample of their DNA. However, there is no law that applies to a US based company performing DNA tests abroad or to those who are not citizens of the US (Schwarz, 2009). William C. Thompson, a professor of Criminology at UC Irvine, described MLB's genetic testing as "troubling because it kind of gives employers a chance to look into the future and to use that to discriminate against people" (Schwarz, 2009, para 18). MLB commented publicly about this issue in 2009 and stated that DNA tests are performed "in very rare instances and only on a consensual basis to deal with the identity fraud problem that the league faces in that country" (Schmidt & Schwarz, 2009, para 5). In the same article, MLB declined to comment on how many players have been tested, what the results were, and where the information was stored (Schmidt & Schwarz, 2009). MLB also required the players to pay for their DNA tests, and only reimbursed them if they were telling the truth about their identities. (Schmidt & Schwarz, 2009).

Medical testing typically discriminates against darker-skinned Haitians, which Thompson argued is related to its genetic focus. Miguel Sanó, the only identifiable Haitian-Dominican player in MLB, was subject to this discrimination. He was born Miguel Ángel Jean in San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic to a poor Haitian family. His mother's last name is Jean and his father's last name is Aponte. When Sanó was a child, his parents split, and changed his last name to Sanó. He claims this was out of respect of the Dominican Republic and not to help with his baseball career. He was such a good baseball player as a young teenager in the Dominican Republic, he was estimated to sign for approximately $5 million. However, the birth documents that he submitted to MLB at the time of his signing were deemed to be fraudulent because MLB did not trust them. MLB assumed that he was older than sixteen, the age Sanó claimed to

be, and they also investigated the identities of his parents (Schoenfeld, 2017; Dorsey, 2015). MLB then required him to be fingerprinted and bone density testing was conducted to determine his true age (Schoenfeld, 2017). MLB also traced back his school records as a part of the investigation (Wetmore, 2015). The entire process lasted three months, and the results came back inconclusive. “It was very difficult,” said Sanó about the process. “They wouldn’t tell me anything about the investigation. I was in the dark” (Dorsey, 2015, para 6). Most MLB teams wanted the services of Sanó, but “rather than have all 30 teams do the testing, Major League Baseball stepped in and did the testing,” claimed the then Minnesota Twins General Manager (Dorsey, 2015, para 9). While MLB claims that this testing in consensual, it does not appear that Sanó had a choice if he wanted to sign a professional contract. Even though the investigation did not find him to be older than claimed or someone other than himself, it cost him roughly $2 million in his signing bonus. He ended up signing with the Twins for $3.15 million in 2009 (Dorsey, 2015).

MLB does admit that there is discrimination within the Dominican baseball system. Sandy Alderson, former General Manager of the New York Mets and Vice President of MLB, claims, "Long before you get to Major League Baseball, there's a selection process that discriminates against Haitians” (Schoenfeld, 2017, para 13). This is mainly in reference to the buscónes and how Haitians are restricted from entering the pipeline. However, the medical testing that Sanó had to endure is also another example of this. Alderson was responsible for cleaning up the broken Dominican baseball system. He was asked by a Sports Illustrated reporter in 2010 about the role fingerprinting played in investigations surrounding fraud. He responded by saying, “If it [fingerprinting] is used,

it will only be used on players as part of a registration process prior to entering a club academy so that they we can make sure those players aren't being taken advantage of by any particular club. . .There's absolutely no intention whatsoever to use fingerprinting for any other purpose including youth baseball" (Segura, 2010, para 10). This is not only a lie, but it is also a justification for fingerprinting international talent. In a separate interview with the *New York Times,* Alderson changed his position by claiming, "Age and identity continues to be a major issue, and it's important to address it before the signing process begins, and the fingerprinting technology will help us do that and lock in their identities" (Schmidt, 2010, Dominican Prospects para 3). He then claimed that fingerprint scanning machines would be installed at all team facilities to track the amount of time unsigned prospects were spending at academies and showcases prior to the June 2nd signing day. He again provided a different reason for fingerprinting: "It will allow [MLB] to track players and make sure they are not spending more than 30 days with a team before they sign. We will now know that a player needs to come out of that academy as the rules state, so other teams can see him. Ultimately, it will help the player and help their marketing of themselves to other teams" (Schmidt, 2010, Dominican Prospects, para 12).

Alderson justifies fingerprinting, but he also is claiming altruism, as fingerprinting is intended to help the player, rather than MLB. Alderson finishes by saying, "We have a significant problem here. We have to figure out what is appropriate legally, and we want to be recognized as a good corporate citizen, and we want a positive reputation. Does something like DNA testing undermine that? It very well might" (Schmidt, 2010, Baseball Emissary, para 16). The complete domination by MLB's

surveillance practices demonstrates neocolonial practices, as the prospects face consistent control to be refined and shipped to the United States. Discrimination is also commonplace, and MLB justifies its practices of racism by making their actions seem necessary.

4.3. American Dream as Enticement

MLB also uses the American dream as a form of enticement for prospects to enter the pipeline. According to Elias (2016), the American dream depicts the United States as a land of abundant opportunity where "sufficient dedication and hard work guarantees individual mobility and success," while also promising "wealth and riches for all who energetically seek them, regardless of one's class, gender, religion, and ethnicity" (p. 5). As Elias (2016) argues, "The American dream makes the country special: it nourishes the American people, it seduces foreigners to our shores, and it spreads the American way far beyond our own borders" (p. 5).

Baseball embodies the American dream because Dominicans are pursuing the sport to escape poverty in the Dominican Republic. MLB has a physical presence on the island with the academies, so the American dream seems to be more achievable and proximate for prospects. Dominican players see success stories of friends and relatives that sign a professional contract, so they feel as if playing professional baseball is a realistic goal (Klein, 1989).

MLB justifies the academy system as a way to chase the American dream. The Arizona Diamondbacks Vice President of International Operations Junior Noboa claims, "Baseball is like an escape. It's the goal for the children that want a better future for them and their families. This is why there is much passion in baseball" (Payne, 2016, para 2).

The Diamondbacks Coordinator of Latin American Operations Chuy Mendoza also argues the academies are a better situation for players than being back at home because "they come here and are able to eat better, they get education, and they sleep better. They are in a better place" (Payne, 2016, para 10). Noboa justifies the academy system around education, saying "when these Latinos go and play in their first year in the United States, they will know their agents and coaches that will help them lots" (Payne, 2016, para 14). The idea of a better future is powerful in a nation where poverty is dominant.

Butterworth (2010) claims that the American dream "is a narrative that instructs citizens about the American 'way of life' and lures foreigners with its promises of a better future" (p. 54). In the baseball pipeline, the American dream is sold to prospects as a way of getting them signed. For example, the phrase "te venden un sueño," or they sell you a dream, has been used when describing how Cuban players are convinced to sign with a team (Eden, 2017). Even though my focus is on the Dominican Republic, the concept of selling the American dream remains similar, as MLB can invest cheaply in its prospects.

Juffer (2002) suggests that media plays a role in the reason Dominicans pursue baseball, as "Baseball perpetuates the illusion of upward mobility and suggests to U.S. viewers that players can transcend the poverty of Latin America if they only work hard enough, at which point they are granted access to the American dream" (p. 347). Even though young Dominican athletes are told that it is possible to reach stardom and escape poverty in the United States, this is not completely realistic. It is reported by MLB that 90-95% of all international players that sign a professional contract never reach the major leagues, but other estimates claim that as high as 98% fail to reach Major League

Baseball (Juffer, 2002; Gregory, 2010). Even though it is unlikely that a player signed will play in the major leagues, seeing Dominican stars play on television helps to sell the American dream to Dominican players as an enticement to enter the pipeline. This further demonstrates neocolonialism because the American dream is a dominant ideology communicated by MLB as a control mechanism to encourage young prospects to enter into the academy system, so they can be transformed into prospects with enough talent to be sent to the United States. The American dream is also reinforced by the physical presence of the academies on the island, as it makes the goal of playing professionally seem more obtainable. Controlling of subordinates is a common theme of neocolonialism, and MLB demonstrates this by communicating the American dream.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS

In this thesis, I have argued that MLB operates the academy system as a means of neocolonial control over its international prospects in the Dominican Republic. I have analyzed discourse rhetorically directly from MLB executives and representatives from clubs, and how they justify this system. I focused on how these justifications exploit Dominican prospects as laborers, to where they are sold to an MLB team for extremely cheap in hopes that they will thrive as players, which will allow them to create profit for a team. MLB uphold an insufficient education system, where they are educated to become more mentally aware on a baseball field. This is a control mechanism, and MLB claims this system of being educated on American culture and the opportunity to earn a high school diploma is helpful for the prospect to have better fortunes for life after baseball. This is argued by MLB to be altruistic, rather than controlling. In reality, MLB educates players to learn how to learn, which will help their baseball careers (Baxter, 2006). MLB also situates foreign players under surveillance, where they are fingerprinted and subject to medical tests so MLB can determine their true age and identity. This is unique solely to international players, specifically Haitian-Dominican players. MLB argues that this protocol actually helps the players market themselves to other teams (Schmidt, 2010, Dominican Prospects). Lastly, the American dream myth is delivered to prospects as a form of enticement to pursue baseball as a career. The Dominican Republic is an extremely poor country, so the American dream allows a vision of upward mobility and an opportunity to change one's fortunes. The academies are also thought to be a better place for the prospects than at home because they are well fed, have better housing facilities, and receive an education (Payne, 2016). They also have an opportunity to be an

MLB star, who are seen throughout the world on television. By MLB games being broadcasted internationally, prospects see what they can become, which is an enticement of the American dream (Juffer, 2002). In these instances I have analyzed, altruism was communicated by MLB to cover up their dominating practices in the Dominican Republic and its academy system. This study contributes to critical cultural sport literature by rhetorically analyzing MLB's justifications of a broken academy system. Past literature has discussed neocolonialism, baseball, and the Dominican Republic, but this thesis demonstrates how MLB justifies this dominating system as a way to better help impoverished players find a positive future through pursuing professional baseball.

Since the academy system in the Dominican Republic has its flaws, I offer a few suggestions to help better the academy system and the opportunities for the prospects after baseball. First, MLB should regulate the buscón system because currently they operate alone, where discrimination and malpractice occurs frequently. MLB has a Department of Investigations in the Dominican Republic, but they do not interfere with the signing of children to the buscónes. I recommend that MLB do background checks on the buscónes and monitor them frequently to prevent exploitation.

I also argue that MLB should do a better job with education within the academies. There is no curriculum to teach the prospects English, American culture, banking, etc. There is also no curriculum for their classes to earn a high school diploma. The classes are often taught by coaches who, as part of their job, "teach" classes to prospects. When I interned with MLB's Department of Education in Santo Domingo in the Summer of 2014, I witnessed English classes at almost half of the academies. One class I sat in on was at the Atlanta Braves' academy and the third base coach was "teaching" the class,

but he only played a video from the 1980's about United States history. This seemed almost like an obligation to hold class, even though it was completely unproductive. Other academies had much improved English classes, such as the Houston Astros. The Astros hired an English teacher from a high school in Chicago to teach all of the English classes, and I believe other teams should follow suit. I also suggest that if MLB teams offer a high school education to its prospects, they should have teachers teach subjects that are not currently offered, but are in regular schools. These include subjects like English, Science, Social Studies, and History, among others. Since the academies' education system is inconsistent, I argue that MLB should develop a curriculum for the academies to use when educating its players, and develop something similar to a Board of Education. This way, MLB will have consistent and quality education across all academies that will benefit players after their departure from the academies.

This thesis advances the problems from rhetoric of sport scholarship by discussing how athletes are controlled and dominated through a postcolonial lens. I focused on Dominican baseball prospects and how MLB dominates them by offering insufficient education, by monitoring them through medical testing, and by appropriating the American dream to entice them to enter the academy system. MLB justifies their actions rhetorically through public statements by executives and representatives, and also by posting information about the academies online. I found that MLB exercises neocolonial power in the Dominican Republic, taking advantage of labor, legal, and cultural inequities in order to control prospects and to produce a cheap labor pool from which it can feed talent to the leagues in the US.

This project provides a more general framework for how large institutions like MLB operate neocolonially to control and dominate players, a framework that relates to but extends beyond professional baseball. There have been studies connecting neocolonialism and the Dominican academies before, but this project provides evidence for how this system is justified according to MLB. Thus, scholars can use this thesis as a model for further research on athletes as neocolonial subjects, especially for organizations that operate out of powerful nations like the US through outposts in other countries. My thesis demonstrates that problems of postcolonial and neocolonial politics relate not only to specific athletes, but to the broader structures within which they play.

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