

COMMUNITY RELATIONS: MEASURING IMPACT IN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN MASS COMMUNICATION

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
2012

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To my mom, dad, sister, and Lacey, you believed in me when I did not believe in myself
I would not be here without you. This is our accomplishment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my supervisory committee for their patience, understanding and commitment. A special thank you to my chair, Dr. Molleda, for encouraging me and guiding me through this process while accommodating my shortcomings. I would also like to thank all of my friends and family who have supported me. Most importantly my mom, dad, sister, Lacey, and Charlie for cheering me on, providing loving support, sound advice, encouragement, and understanding, which helped me accomplish this goal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
LIST OF TABLES	7
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	8
ABSTRACT	9
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	11
Background on the Four Major North American Sports	11
Sports Revenue.....	14
Community Relations in Professional Sports.....	15
Statement of Problem	17
Community Relations: A Component of Corporate Social Responsibility	19
Significance of Study	20
Theoretical Foundation	23
Purpose of Study	24
Research Questions	26
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	27
Community Relations.....	27
Community Relations in the Organization	30
Multicultural Community Relations	33
Corporate Social Responsibility	35
Community Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility.....	38
CSR and Sports	39
Community as a Theory.....	42
Measurement.....	47
Outputs and Outcomes.....	49
Outputs	49
Outcomes.....	50
Measuring Relationships	52
Symmetrical Measurement.....	56
Summary of Literature Review.....	58
3 METHODOLOGY	60
Participants	60
Instrumentation	60
Procedures and Data Collection	62

	Data Analysis.....	64
4	DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	67
	Respondent Profile.....	67
	Conceptual Content Analysis.....	69
5	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	86
	Discussion of Findings.....	86
	Measurement and Evaluation.....	86
	Definitions of Community.....	88
	Community Relations.....	90
	Measuring Relationships.....	91
	Community Participation.....	93
	Two-way Communication.....	95
	Organizational Structure.....	96
	Multicultural Elements.....	98
	Conclusions.....	99
	Implications for the Practice.....	103
	Suggestions for Future Research.....	104
	Delimitations.....	105
	Limitations.....	105
 APPENDIX		
A	COPY OF IRB APPROVAL.....	108
B	COPY OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	109
C	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	110
	LIST OF REFERENCES.....	112
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	120

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>		<u>page</u>
4-1	Respondent Profile	68

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Community Relations	Strategic implementation of objectives to create, maintain, enhance, and repair relationships with stakeholders and stakeholders whose interests can be aligned with those of the organization (Heath & Ni, 2008, ¶15).
Corporate Social Responsibility	A commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources (Kotler & Lee, 2007, p. 3).
Multicultural Relations	Management of formal communication between organizations and their relevant publics to create and maintain communities of interest and action that favor the organization (Banks, 1995, p. 21).
Social Media	Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).
Two-way communications	Uses research, listening, and dialogue to manage conflict and to cultivate relationships with both internal and external strategic publics more than one-way and asymmetrical communication (J. Grunig, 2009, p. 2).

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Mass Communication

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August 2012

Chair: Juan-Carlos Molleda
Major: Mass Communication

Professional sports franchises have an extraordinary platform to build lasting relationships with their local communities. However, there is a lack of public relations literature in professional sports. Sport management literature has scratched the surface of this topic, but considering every major professional sports team has a community relations department; there is need for more research in the field. An exploratory study was conducted to examine measurement and evaluation of programming. Specifically the study attempted to analyze how community relations departments are measuring the strength and quality of their relationships with the community.

Data were collected using a structured telephone interview with community relations employees from all four major professional sports. A convenience sample of 13 participants representing 14 teams from all four sports completed the interviews. The interviews described the participant's beliefs on a variety of topics including: the definition of community and community relations, the current relationship between the team and their community, dialogue and two-way communication, community participation, organizational hierarchy, league programs, and measurement.

A conceptual content analysis was employed to analyze transcripts from the

interviews. Results included the following findings: (1) Measurement in community relations is neither standardized nor consistent among professional sports franchises. (2) An effort is being made by most teams to foster dialogue and encourage two-way communication and community participation. (3) Organizational structures and hierarchies in professional sports franchises have placed community relations under the watch and direction of the head of the marketing department. (4) Community is primarily being defined by geographic boundaries. (5) Teams in all four leagues serve a common goal and that was evident from the responses, which included: providing support to the community, being a good neighbor, building relationships, and improving the lives of people.

Community relations employees mostly described the relationship between the team and community as being positive, despite the fact that measurement is still focused on outputs as opposed to outcomes. Overall there is a lack of reliable data on community impacts and outcomes, or the quality of relationships. However, it was evident employees were focusing on key constructs of relationships despite formal evaluation.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background on the Four Major North American Sports

Four major sports leagues dominate the economic landscape in North America and all four have created global enterprises worth billions of dollars. These four sports, football, hockey, baseball and basketball and their governing leagues, the National Football League (NFL), National Hockey League (NHL), Major League Baseball (MLB), and the National Basketball Association (NBA) reach nearly every country worldwide. The economic impact of these four sports, especially in the United States is tremendous. Sport is a unique and distinct enterprise and each individual team exerts enormous influence on local communities both economically and socially (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007).

Over the past 50 years the sports industry has evolved into an incredibly influential and economically successful business in today's society. Sports are a part of our culture, "spectator sport has never been more popular, at least as measured by audience size and ticket prices" (Sauer, 2008, p. 5). All 32 teams in the NFL made the annual Forbes list of the 50 wealthiest sports franchises. In addition, teams from the four major sports made up 40 of the 50 on the list (Badenhausen, 2011). According to Plunkett Research Ltd. (2010) the sports industry in the United States generated \$422 billion in revenues in 2010 and the four major professional sports brought in \$23.3 billion in revenues in the United States alone. The research also showed that the average value of each team was approximately \$523 million for baseball, \$1 billion for football, \$369 million for basketball and \$228 million for hockey. "However, the sports industry is so complex, including ticket sales, licensed products, sports video games, collectibles,

sporting goods, sports-related advertising, endorsement income, stadium naming fees and facilities income, that it's difficult to put an all-encompassing figure on annual revenue" (Plunkett Research Ltd., ¶ 2).

Worldwide, the economic influence of sports is even greater and "the sports industry is growing faster than Gross Domestic Product both in fast-growing economies, such as the booming nations of Brazil, Russia, India and China, and in more mature markets in Europe and North America" (Zygband, Collingon, Sultan, Santander, & Valensi, 2011, ¶ 6). Despite a lack of definitive numbers, there is no doubt about the economic impact that professional sports teams exert in the United States and around the globe. In addition, sports franchises contribute significantly to local economies. Revenue to local communities comes from tourism, sales taxes, game attendance and increased sales in local businesses, especially bars and restaurants during game days (Coakley, 2008).

The four major leagues in North America have a global reach as well. Therefore, each team must take into account how their community actions impact their fans and communities in other cities around the country and abroad. Games from these sports are televised in nearly every nation, and millions of people participate in sporting events all over the world. In 2010, teams from all four sports participated in, at the very least, exhibition games in foreign countries. These games add to their broad impact on global pop culture. In 2011 the NFL continued its international series hosting games in London and Toronto. One of the teams participating, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, hosted community events while abroad in the United Kingdom to engage new fans and help

spread the NFL overseas. This is just another example of the global recognition that American sports franchises have earned.

Because the industry has so much financial and cultural influence, officials from individual teams and the leagues now go to considerable lengths to implement community relations programs. These programs should help establish and maintain lasting and positive relationships with a community of fans, sponsors, and supporters, no matter where they are located geographically. Local communities are paramount to a team's existence and success. Teams rely on their fan base for a variety of financial reasons and moral support. If a team shows no interest in the welfare of the local community, they may be faced with hostile and unwelcoming fans, dissatisfied customers, and decreases in ticket sales which can affect profitability.

It is well established that sports teams exert considerable effort and energy into addressing specific societal issues they deem to be important (Babiak, 2010). From local programs to global initiatives, sports teams have attempted to spread and foster the important life lessons that sports can teach. Most teams work especially hard to impact children and underserved youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods. "Sports have the power to unify people beyond cultural, social, ethnic and religious barriers," Cappato and Pennazio stated (2006, p. 3). Fair play, hard work, perseverance, and integrity are often terms that sports teams and leagues attempt to promote. "Sports philanthropy is a dynamic and influential sector emerging in the nonprofit arena with unrivaled potential to dramatically affect positive change and community development, using the core values embodied by sports to meet the needs of those underserved," Robinson explained (2005, p. V).

Sports Revenue

Revenue for the four major sports comes from six streams, gate revenue (ticket sales), television-broadcasting rights, merchandising, sponsorships, ownership, and concessions during games and other events held at stadiums (Williams, 2006).

According to Fischer (2010) the business model of the NFL is unique when comparing it to the other three sports in that the teams all share a large quantity of revenue, nearly \$5 billion annually:

Unlike the NFL, the NBA, MLB, and NHL are more oriented on gate receipts and local media. The NFL generated \$1.68 billion in local gate receipts in 2008, which was only 22 percent of its total revenue. The NBA share of gate receipts to total revenue is 32 percent (2008-09), the MLB share is 37 percent (2008), and the NHL share is 42 percent (2008-09) (p. 5).

Tickets prices range widely, from more than \$200 for teams like the Los Angeles Lakers and Toronto Maple Leafs to less than \$20 for baseball's Cincinnati Reds and Arizona Diamondbacks (Brown, 2011). However, ticket prices are rarely reflected in the product and prices often increase after a team fields a losing team. The Toronto Blue Jays (MLB) have the second highest average ticket price in baseball and have not made the playoffs since they won the world series in 1993 (McIntyre & Sauter, 2010). Babiak (2010) explained that as a result of enormous team revenues, player salaries, and ever climbing ticket prices, a demand has been placed on teams to implement community programs. Teams meet the demand with efforts to "give back" to local communities using a variety of tactics. "[M]any sport organizations turn to community outreach activities to address important social issues, build good-will in their communities, and at the same time, enhance their public image and garner other advantages" (p. 528).

Sports venues also represent considerable economic interests within local communities. “During the years from 2000 to 2009, 31 major-league stadiums and arenas opened and the price tag, in public funds from local communities, was approximately \$8 billion” (Santo & Mildner, 2010, ¶4). This figure does not reflect total cost of the stadiums, but rather what was used through sales taxes and other public revenue sources. For example the Dallas Cowboys new stadium had a price tag of \$1.25 billion but owner Jerry Jones privately funded more than half of those costs (Badenhausen, 2011).

Community Relations in Professional Sports

All four professional sports leagues and their teams focus on community relations through league-wide initiatives and individual team platforms. In the collective bargaining agreements of each league there are mandated community relations initiatives tied into the contracts for players, coaches, and owners. In addition, individual players, coaches, and owners often have their own personal foundations dedicated to a social cause they identify with (Babiak, 2010).

Francis (2007) said “the NFL, including member teams, players, coaches and families, has served communities across the United States for over 75 years” (p. 24). The NFL explains its commitment to community in its mission statement and focuses on serving communities year-round. “Through the active involvement of the 32 NFL teams, and long-standing partners, the league is able to make a positive difference in America's communities and connect with millions of fans each year” (NFL, 2011). In addition, the NFL focuses on six areas with their community programs: youth football, the NFL Play 60 program, breast cancer awareness, military appreciation, community outreach (primarily charitable donations), player health and safety, and recognition programs.

League commissioner Rodger Goodell, explained the NFL contributes more than \$10 million to charitable causes each year, and a total of more than \$150 million to youth football programs. In addition, during disasters such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, the NFL and the players association were able to raise \$10 million and \$22 million respectively (NFL, 2011).

The NHL has chosen to focus on education and children's health. The league has an established record of charitable financial contributions and volunteering. The league's other programs include: Hockey Fights Cancer, Hockey is for Everyone, the Teammates for Kids Foundation, which serves as the official charity of the league and players association, and NHL Green. As a part of this platform the league launched their NHL Green website in 2012 which is dedicated to environmental stewardship and sustainable initiatives such as carbon neutral stadiums, water savings, and recycling (NHL, 2011).

The NBA Cares is the league's community outreach initiative. The program "addresses important social issues such as education, youth and family development, and health and wellness" (NBA, 2011). This platform provides teams with autonomy to carry out their own programs designed to fit the needs of the local community. Additionally the league partners with more than 20 global nonprofits and has volunteered nearly 2 million hours while donating \$175 million since 2005. The NBA supports five primary programs: NBA/WNBA FIT, NBA Green, Basketball without Borders, Read to Achieve, and Coaches for Kids. The NBA also recognizes the player who best demonstrates a connection and passion for their local community and dedication to the league's commitment to community relations monthly with the

Community Assist Award, with the most recent winner being Pau Gasol of the Los Angeles Lakers (NBA, 2011).

Finally MLB has fifteen community programs focusing on diversity, youth baseball, cancer prevention and other health measures, education, military recognition, and sustainability just to name a few (MLB, 2011). They focus heavily on bringing baseball to inner-city areas and improving communities through sport. Major projects include building ball fields and providing equipment to underserved areas in the local communities (MLB, 2011). There is no information available on total donations or service hours, but through a diverse platform and various partnerships with nonprofits, specifically the United Way, the MLB has certainly positioned itself as a strong partner in the community.

Statement of Problem

Endless revenue increases from sports franchises along with public funding initiatives for stadium construction, increased ticket prices, and millionaire athletes have brought a demand on teams to give back. At the end of the 1980s, none of the four major leagues in North America had more than five teams that supported charitable causes or had foundations of their own. In 2010, at least 24 teams in each of the four leagues have their own foundations and every team and league supports some type of community platform (Harrow & Swatek, 2010). Due to an increased demand by stakeholders on the organization for socially responsible action and a belief from ownership in community service, sports franchises have taken huge steps in implementing community relations programs.

Over the past 25 years, major sports teams have begun to serve their communities using a variety of strategies. However, there has been a history of cause-

related marketing tactics used to bolster teams' reputation or repair a tarnished image. "Historically organizations have been reactive rather than proactive when it comes to community relations," Francis stated (2007, p. 14). Public relations literature has not extensively examined community relations from a practitioner standpoint, i.e. what are the most effective strategies and tactics to build long-term relationships with the community. Furthermore, there is no understanding of how organizations, in this case, professional sports teams, are measuring and evaluating these programs and relationships. To put it in plain terms, what are the strategies being adopted to best serve the needs of not only the team, but also the community and society? And how are teams measuring both the outcomes and outputs that are linked directly to community relations?

Community relations programs offer sports organizations a unique opportunity to connect with stakeholders and create positive and lasting relationships (Babiak, 2010). The impact from effective community relations efforts can position organizations to maintain quality relationships and build a strong reputation of service and commitment (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Additionally, Roy and Graeff (2003) explained sports teams are major corporations and therefore have some responsibility to act as good corporate citizens or good neighbors. Effective community relations can provide teams with endless opportunities to connect with fans and supporters and serve underprivileged groups. This service provides benefits to the team and community. Because of the growing financial and societal influence teams have in their local communities this area of research is rich with opportunities.

Community Relations: A Component of Corporate Social Responsibility

Searches using Google Scholar and Nexis.com for community relations returned relatively few results. Many results turned up articles on multicultural communications and communicating with diverse communities. While that is an important component of public relations, it is not wholly encompassing of community relations programming. The small sample of existing research offers scholars endless possibilities under which to examine community relations. The Institute for Public Relations has placed community relations, as a field of research, under the function of corporate social responsibility [CSR] (Heath & Ni, 2008). Public relations textbooks have defined community relations as a function of public relations as well. It is commonly described as activities with local communities that enable benefits for both the organization and the community (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Seitel, 2004; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009).

Corporate social responsibility is a rich field of study. It can be broken down to encompass many organizational practices with community relations itself, serving as one of those. "Review of CSR literature and best practices leads us to two basic conclusions. First, although the scholarly literature and best practices commentary often treat CSR as a singular concept with universal meaning, the reality is that it is a complex quilt cut from different fabrics" (Heath & Ni, 2008, ¶ 2). Community relations should be thought of as a function or component of an organization's (team in this case) overall CSR practices and policies. Within the context of this research, the term community relations can be used to identify specific practices sports teams are implementing to serve and build relationships with their communities. For which the outcome can be relationship development and cultivation.

In an early review of the literature the term community relations is linked with a variety of other concepts, which include, but are not limited to: corporate giving, strategic philanthropy, social sponsoring, and corporate citizenship (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010). The decision to implement community relations, as it pertains to CSR, is motivated by many factors. “Companies support communities and nonprofit organizations for reasons ranging from self-interest to altruism and in a variety of ways ranging from financial support to community relations activities,” Hall explained (2006, p. 1). These motives are becoming more widely recognized as being the right thing to do rather than being driven by profits. However, the literature on CSR motives is scarce and needs additional studies and more in-depth research. Hall (2006) argued that community relations as a function of CSR, along with corporate philanthropy, can be used to “measure the impact and overall wellbeing of the relationship between an organization and the community in which it operates” (p. 2).

Many researchers have focused on specific community issues relating to sports marketing communication, but have not looked at it from a broader context related to organizational culture (Chernushenko, Van Der. Kamp, & Stubbs, 2001; Gratton & Henry, 2001; Lussier & Kimball, 2009). Furthermore, CSR and community relations are often linked to corporate reputation rather than being evaluated by the social outcomes they have produced, and in return, the impact on the organization (Coakley, 2008; Kiouisis, Popescu, & Mitrook, 2007).

Significance of Study

Today, it is virtually impossible to find a major participant in the sports industry anywhere in the world that is not contributing to their local communities. “All professional sport organizations currently engage in various forms of community

outreach efforts, and many are creating foundations to support social causes in their communities,” Robinson said (2005, p. 8). The commitment stems from a shift in corporate America to focus more on responsible business practices (Seitel, 2004). Motivations aside, sports teams have adopted many practices to engage with local communities and address major societal issues.

As profits increase, so too does the demand for community programs. Hon (1998) called for research on the fundamental conclusions between public, or in this case, community relations activities, and specific and measurable outcomes. This research seeks to bridge a significant gap and leads to a better understanding of variations between sports and teams in their community relations programs. In addition the research uses that information to determine a link between the programming and its effect on impact and outcomes with community members. Specifically, how, if at all are community relations programs being used to build relationships and what does this mean for these teams long term? This research adds depth to both community relations and sport literature by investigating and comparing all four major sports through a qualitative conceptual content analysis.

Every team and league has different approaches to their community relations programs and how they communicate and implement those programs with their targeted publics (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010). However, according to the literature, there should be commonalities when talking about the overall goals and the ultimate success of community relations programs (Babiak, 2010; Hall, 2006; Lakin & Scheubel, 2010; Seitel, 2004). In spite of this, there is little academic research in the area of professional sports and community relations. This research explores the types of

community relations strategies and tactics implemented across these actors in the sports industry in order to identify the common methods used to develop and enhance community programs and achieve maximum impact. Drawing on the constructs of building and maintaining quality relationships set forth by Hon and Grunig (1999), this research seeks to identify how community relations programming is measured using a qualitative in-depth interview process.

One of the most significant challenges for public relations practitioners is trying to quantify the impact of the overall community efforts of an athlete, team, or organization. For example, how can you put a dollar figure on the impact of an athlete visiting a sick child, or providing a free flag football camp to a group of disadvantaged youth? These are important questions when attempting to analyze community relations programs and their impact on the overall goals of the organization. Linking programming to organizational goals is important and helps in the evaluation phase. The objectives of the organization's communications should work to achieve specific outcomes and meet the goals of the organization (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000; Seitel, 2004; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Wilcox and Cameron (2009) argued it is "particularly important that public relations objectives compliment and reinforce the organization's objectives" (p. 158).

As mentioned above, each league has implemented specific community relations programs that focus on different societal issues. However, individual teams are also free to make choices on their own programs as well, or make changes to league programs. One important facet of this study will be to find what department handles community relations for a given team and if that varies from sport-to-sport or team-to-

team. The results of this study offer practitioners a chance to reflect and provide a base line for an introspective look at current community programs. Additionally, the research examines differences in strategies between sports and geographic locations which could be expanded on with future studies.

Theoretical Foundation

Hallahan (2004) argued that community itself is a solid foundation for theory in public relations literature:

Despite the ubiquity of the public construct, a strong argument can be made for positioning community as the conceptual centerpiece for examining and practicing public relations. Indeed, the field might be better called community relations (p. 5).

Kruckeberg and Stark (1988) may have in fact conceived the idea of community as a theory in public relations and argued that the field should be defined by an organization's interaction with the community: "Our theory is that public relations is better defined and practiced as the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community" (p. XI).

Despite being a recognized and important sub field of the public relations profession, community relations receives a small amount scholarly attention. It is often lumped in as a part of corporate social responsibility or ignored all together as a viable area of study. "Similarly, although community relations remains a critical part of the public relations practice, community relations receives comparatively little theoretical attention from scholars," Hallahan pointed out (2004, p. 7).

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) defined the parameters of community in two ways, as a "locality – people grouped by geographic location and a nongeographic community of interest – people with a common interest" (p. 266). In the context of sports teams

community can serve both purposes. Teams must focus directly on the local communities in which they operate, but fans serve as nongeographic communities and can be located anywhere throughout the world because they share the common interest in the team. Within the context of this research it is particularly relevant because sports franchises rely so heavily on building long-term fans. One way to do that is through continued community relations efforts that positively impact the fans and the surrounding communities.

Furthermore, using community as a theoretical foundation strengthens the idea that community relations programming will have an impact on social issues within a community. This means that an organization's existence will go beyond simply carrying out business objectives, but acting as an interested member of the community. Aligning the team interests with those of the community enhance the ability to build quality relationships that benefit both parties.

Purpose of Study

Sports literature often focuses on community relations as a part of the reputation building strategy. This definition more closely resembles cause-related marketing than public relations, corporate social responsibility, or community relations. "The literature in sport marketing often recommends that athletic organizations need to engage in some form of community image building activities as a way to increase appeal, attractiveness and attendance," Francis argued (2007, p. 19). The purpose of this study is to examine the community relations programs in the four major sports in the United States: National Football League (NFL), National Hockey League (NHL), Major League Baseball (MLB), and the National Basketball Association (NBA). This research uses a conceptual content analysis to examine existing programs and relationships between

the team and community. This research investigates measurement procedures to better understand the formal and informal evaluation of the constructs of quality relationships and whether tracking outputs is the only method of evaluation. Additionally, the research examines the types of community relations programs utilized by each team, definitions of community, organizational structures, community participation, multicultural communications, and two-way communication, and finally how programming serves the overall goals of the team.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions.

1. How do professional sports franchises define community and community relations?
2. What strategies and tactics are professional sports franchises using in their community relations programming?
 - a. Do community members [publics] and partners [co-sponsors] participate in the decision-making process of community relations programming?
3. How do professional sports franchises evaluate community relations programs?
 - a. Are there similarities between sports (i.e., NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB)?
 - b. Does the community relations programming of professional sports franchises contribute to the overall goals of the each team/league?
4. What are considered to be the most important outcomes of community relations programs for professional sports teams?
5. Do community relations departments in professional sports franchises utilize two-way communication strategies to facilitate programming?
6. How do professional sports franchises characterize their team's relationship with the community?
 - a. How do professional sports franchises measure or quantify their relationship with the community?

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Community Relations

Despite the fact that community relations is a well-established area of study and practice within the public relations field, contemporary literature and theoretical analysis regarding community relations is scarce. Much of what is available typically focuses on multicultural relations, community building, both domestically and abroad, or corporate social responsibility [CSR]. According to Hallahan (2004) other articles have focused on case studies rather than empirical research (such as Mitchell & Schnyder, 1989; Tilson & Stacks, 1997). In an online search using “LexisNexis” of the Journal of Public Relations Research dating back to the year 2000, there were fewer than 10 articles dedicated specifically to community relations.

Practitioner literature did not turn up many articles related to community relations either. The popular trade publication PR Week included no articles specifically focused on community relations over the past 10 years. Those that did mention the topic approached the subject as cause-related marketing and reputation or issues management. These articles pointed out ways to bolster or repair an organization’s image, especially during times of crisis (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004).

In order to better understand community relations it will first be helpful to review several public relations textbook definitions. Then by examining some of the scholarly work that has focused on the community as both a theory and a primary public of focus in public relations (Hallahan, 2004; Kruckeberg, 2006; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988; Starck & Kruckeberg, 2001) a clear picture of community relations will emerge. Other scholars have focused on community relations as an essential function of the

organization (Coakley, 2008; Hall, 2006; Heath & Ni, 2008) and that conceptualization serves as the framework for this research.

Public relations textbooks offer a plethora of definitions on community relations, but some themes emerge and remain consistent. Arnoff and Baskin (1983) defined the term as “an organization’s planned, active, and continuing participation within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the organization and the community” (p. 238). More contemporary texts have actually regressed when attempting to explain the concept. Seitel (2004) defined community relations as “positively putting forth the organization’s messages and image in the community” (p. 10), a concept much further removed from the idea of relationship building. Still yet another definition provided by Wilcox and Cameron (2009) defined community relations as, “planned activity with a community to maintain an environment that benefits both the organization and the community” (p. 10). Parsons (2004) examined the topic internally and stated that it is public relations’ contribution to an organization’s social responsibility requirements. This is an important concept when examining organizational structure and where community relations fits in regarding goals and objectives.

Recently however, the most useful and accurate definition has come from Heath and Ni (2008) in a contribution to the Institute for Public Relations at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The authors explained community relations as the “strategic implementation of objectives to create, maintain, enhance, and repair relationships with stakeholders and stakeseekers whose interests can be aligned with those of the organization” (¶15). This definition is both thorough and sufficient to explain community

relations as it pertains to this research and will serve as the primary operational definition moving forward. Public relations professionals have, over time, increased emphasis on building and maintaining relationships with their publics (J. Grunig & Hunt 1984) which has resulted in more extensive efforts to implement community relations programs (Arnoff & Baskin 1983).

Other scholars have attempted to expand on these conceptual foundations and to truly examine the role of community within the field of public relations (Berkowitz & Turnmire, 1994; Hallahan 2004; Kruckeberg & Stark, 1988). Berkowitz and Turnmire (1994) offered an analysis of the contribution of community relations programs, stating, “community relations programs need to focus on facilitating communication between an organization and its community publics” (p. 107). In addition, the authors found that the long-term success of an organization can be greatly influenced by community relations programs:

The community is an especially important level of environmental linkage for an organization because successful organizational operations are closely linked to the effectiveness of community relations on an almost daily basis (p. 106).

Lakin and Scheubel (2010) built on this idea and explained that community relations relies on organizational involvement. The authors found community programming extends beyond just a small local group or public. It seems to have a broad reach in terms of its potential effects. The authors said community relations “is about active community partnership projects between your company and/or governments and/or NGOs in the countries/regions/communities where you operate” (p. 4). The authors also argued community relations strategies should take into account three things. First is the needs and current state of their local communities, where

understanding your local community is paramount. Second, are the available opportunities the organization has to contribute, such as financial resources and time. Finally, the goals that the organization wants to achieve within the community. These goals should align with the overall business goals in order to measure success effectively. These considerations allow the organization to provide a greater benefit to themselves and society. Community relations, therefore, should be addressed with specific goals in mind. Achieving goals will forge strong relationships and address societal needs based on the demands and understanding between the organization and community publics (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010).

Other scholars (Burke, 1999; David, Kline, & Dai, 2005; Heath & Ni, 2008) have focused on community relations as a part of a broader strategy of corporate social responsibility [CSR]. Heath and Ni (2008) contend that companies who engage in effective community relations “can have many positive outcomes well beyond marketing impact” (¶ 6.). David, Kline, and Dai (2005) also made the argument that corporations have various options when considering adopting a community relations platform.

Community Relations in the Organization

We now have established an operational definition for community relations and explored a few basics of concepts of effective community relations programs. This subsection will examine some characteristics community programs often share. Seitel (2004) found that gaining community support is difficult for organizations, primarily because communities and community publics expect support from the organization but often “object to any dominance on its part in community affairs” (p. 291). Seitel (2004) also argues that communities expect four intangible attributes from organizations and are listed as follows:

- Appearance- The community expects that the [organization] will contribute positively to life in the area.
- Participation- As a citizen of the community, an organization is expected to participate responsibly in community affairs, such as civic functions, park and recreational activities, education, welfare and support of religious institutions.
- Stability- Communities prefer stable organizations that will grow with the area.
- Pride- Communities want [organizations] that are proud to be residents in the area (p. 290-291).

Of these expectations, participation is a very important concept and can be found throughout public relations literature (Burke, 1999; J. Grunig, 2008; Hallahan, 2004).

These expectations can assist in planning and incorporating community programs into the overall goals of the organization.

Burke (1999) argued that the goal of the community relations function in public relations should be for organizations to become the “neighbors of choice.” In order for the organization to take on this role it:

Requires building relationships, establishing practices and procedures that anticipate and respond to community expectations, concerns and issues; and focusing on support programs that respond to community concerns and strengthen the quality of community life (as cited in Hallahan 2004, p. 7).

Additionally, community relations practitioners should be focused on objectives that address important social issues in the community, not only those that align with business strategy (Burke, 1999).

As Pratt (2010) explained, the objective of community relations programming should not simply be getting involved in a community project but rather, “it requires setting up a system for community input well before major projects are underway...and it requires that business and community interests be aligned for their mutual benefit” (¶17). Burke (1999) takes this argument a step further and explained that there are

three primary objectives when interacting with the community and detailed them in his “neighbor of choice” strategy which is focused on building a relationship of trust between the organization and the community:

One is to build trust relationships in communities; another is to identify and monitor issues and concerns that have a likely impact on the company; and the third is to design the community support programs so that they respond to community and company needs (p. 101).

The idea of building trusting and lasting relationships is linked closely to measurement (Ferguson, 1984; Hon, 1998; Hon and Grunig, 1999) and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. It is evident from the literature that in order for organizations to be successful, they must go beyond simply implementing a program under the banner of community relations. The programs must take into consideration the needs of the community and work to serve those needs using a variety of strategies (Burke, 1999; Pratt, 2010; Seitel, 2004).

Heath and Ni (2008) also found that effective community relations programming should tie in closely to the overall business goals and objectives of the organization. The authors focused on the concept of relationships in their definition of community relations [provided above and paraphrased here] as the implementation of objectives to create, maintain, enhance, and repair relationships (§15). Furthermore, Lee and Higgins (2001) found that community relations programs that do not link their goals and objectives with that of the community will be less successful often due to a lack of support from key decision makers. In addition, programs that are not linked with the goals of the organization may be viewed by stakeholders as desperate attempts to bolster image. There is a “view that an effective business response to societal issues and a meaningful contribution to a civil society require more than just piecemeal, ad hoc

interactions with the community” (Lee & Higgins, 2001, ¶ 4). In other words, community relations will only be successful if it has the support and approval of the entire organization from top to bottom. In the case of sports teams, it includes the owners, players, coaches, administration, and business staff (Babiak, 2010).

Much of the textbook literature devoted to community relations mentions the importance of a detailed community relations plan (Burke, 1999; Seitel, 2004; Wilcox and Cameron, 2009; Yarrington, 1983). The planning phase gives what Yarrington (1983) referred to as direction and consistency, and also engages management by providing them with a detailed agenda of the purpose of the community relations programs. Wilcox and Cameron (2009) noted that when engineering specific objectives three things should be kept in mind. “(1) Does it really address the situation? (2) Is it realistic and achievable? (3) Can success be measured in meaningful terms?” (p. 158). All of the concepts mentioned above should be addressed when mapping out objectives and goals for a community program.

Multicultural Community Relations

One area of community relations that has become increasingly relevant and is important to this research is multicultural community relations. Managing multicultural content has become commonplace for many organizations because of the diversity of their stakeholders and “[m]ulticultural external publics also are found across geographic locations” (Banks, 1995, p.73). All four sports leagues interact with various cultures and diverse populations in the communities in which they operate. Seitel (2004) explained that serving diverse communities is an important aspect of community relations. “The number of discrete communities with which organizations must be concerned with continues to increase” (p. 307). Seitel goes on to include, Latino, African American,

Asian, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered groups as well as seniors and other ethnic groups who will all bring their own perspectives on community issues.

Diversity and multicultural communications are again very broad terms and one can find various definitions for each. Banks (1995) discusses, in detail, the issue of multicultural community relations by defining key terms, calling for specific theories to be incorporated in the research. Furthermore, the author developed concepts, primary functions, and responsibilities when communicating with diverse publics. Banks (1995) defined multicultural public relations as the “management of formal communication between organizations and their relevant publics to create and maintain communities of interest and action that favor the organization” (p. 21). In addition, the author explained the concept of culture as being:

Defined and bounded by the subjective experience of communities of persons who share an understanding that some important aspect of their lives differentiates them from other groups and diversity is a way of referring to the varieties of populations that are on the scene at any given time (p. 21).

This idea is particularly important for teams to consider when reaching out to underserved audiences who may have members of many different backgrounds and cultural beliefs.

Incorporating multicultural elements in community relations platforms should not be overlooked. Tsetsura (2011) explained that publics, communities, and people will vary based on their level of awareness, past experiences, their exposure to different cultures, social status, and their ability and desire to assimilate to the local culture. As a result, incorporating multicultural elements into programming can help to enhance relationships by improving the satisfaction the community has with the organization (Banks, 1995).

L. Grunig (2008) argued the attention given to multiculturalism should go well beyond political correctness and should be approached with lofty “goals of accountability and social responsibility” (p. 128). The author also argues that diverse and multicultural publics bring with them the need for new methods of communication and evaluation. When including diverse communities into programming organizations must consider how the message and program impacts each culture or audience. Public relations and in this case, community relations, practitioners must then as Banks (1995) argued “advocate positive community building through effective communication” (p. 21). The author views community not as a “label for others but a way of referring to a relationship that includes the self, the other, and a set of communication principles” (p. 69). Banks (1995) goes on to explain the role of community relations stating that it is “the public relations program that enhances a particular kind of relationship that is inclusive, self-revealing, genuine, personal, and emergent” (p. 70). As with any programming, the inclusion of multicultural elements should be carefully planned and researched. However, it is certainly a concept gaining traction and importance in business and especially sports.

Corporate Social Responsibility

As mentioned in the introduction, community relations can be considered a function of corporate social responsibility [CSR]. Under the umbrella of CSR are other functions and concepts. Currently there is a considerable amount of literature dedicated to the social obligations organizations have to society at large (Burke, 1999; David et al., 2005; Heath & Ni, 2008). Kotler and Lee (2007) defined CSR as “a commitment to improve community well being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources” (p. 3). While Wilcox and Cameron (2009) argued

that CSR is now “high on the priority list of executives and their public relations staffs who are charged with improving the reputation and citizenship of their employees” (p. 445). Heath and Ni (2008) said “consideration of corporate social responsibility is as old as organizations themselves” (¶4). Additionally, David et al. (2005) postulated that businesses have both the responsibility to make money, but also have the social responsibility to comply with standards, both legal and ethical, that local communities and society as a whole deem appropriate.

For the past six decades there has been a debate over the role of the corporation (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010). The authors point to the argument of famous economist Milton Friedman (1962) who explained that the only responsibility any corporation has is to make profits and not serve anyone but shareholders. In addition, business experts and those who strongly believe in capitalism, claimed that it was the right of the individual, outside of work to decide whether or not to become involved in the community (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010). This way of thinking is not as common today, as many major businesses have adopted socially responsible programs. As the World Business Council stated, “[b]usiness cannot succeed in societies that fail” (as cited in Lakin & Scheubel, 2010, p. 1). The authors also said recently that the business first theory has been highly scrutinized. Now scholars from many different fields such as, business, economics, and communications have argued for and conducted researched on the benefits of CSR. Where there were once only shareholders (Friedman, 1962) many scholars now focus on stakeholders (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; J. Grunig 1992; J. Grunig & Hunt 1984). Alsop (2004) identifies community members as stakeholders of the organization and said “companies are paying more attention to

certain stakeholder groups because of the growing importance of corporate citizenship in the reputation equation” (p. 45). He continued, stating some organizations have neglected their local communities and failing to connect and build relationships with the communities in which they (organizations) operate can be “very dangerous” (p. 45).

Corporations are now being held to higher moral standards than in the past and must position themselves to not only make profits but also, at the very least, not do harm to society. Heath and Ni (2010) explained companies who engage in effective CSR “can have many positive outcomes well beyond marketing impact” (¶ 6.). Maignan and Ferrell (2001) argued corporations and organizations have a responsibility as citizens, and therefore corporate citizenship is “the extent to which businesses assume the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary responsibilities imposed on them by their various stakeholders” (p. 459). However, it is, for the most part, no longer acceptable for corporations to simply do what is legally required of them and many corporations have therefore taken on what Maignan and Ferrell (2001) refer to as discretionary responsibilities “designed to reflect society’s desire to see businesses participate actively in the betterment of society beyond the minimum standards set by the economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities (p. 459).

Corporate social responsibility requires action (Heath & Ni, 2008; Maignan & Ferrell, 2001). The actions have to be in place for the right reasons and can be designed to fit any organization or community. The important concept to consider is that CSR programs will be most effective if they are accepted by management and imbedded in the corporate culture as a way to benefit the organization and society at large (Heath & Ni, 2008).

Community Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility

As mentioned, community relations can be thought of as a part of a team's overall CSR strategy. One notable difference that has been mentioned in the literature about CSR versus community relations is that "CSR communication initiatives generally fall within the purview of the press agency or publicity functions of public relations" David et. al explained (2005, p. 296). Community relations, on the other hand, has been supported as being more successful when it uses the two-way symmetrical model (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Dozier, 2002; Ledingham & Bruning; 2000; Yarrington, 1983). Banks (1995) postulated that genuine dialogue between communicators and their publics is one of the most effective ways to build relationships as well. "The underlying principles, motives, and values that are necessary for effective community relations are established in dialogue" (p. 74-75). DeTienne and Lewis (2005) pointed out organizations can create value by creating social networks within their local community that add value and contribute to the success of the organization. Heath and Ni (2008) found a large portion of literature is devoted to CSR as one singular idea and use community relations and CSR interchangeably. However, they make the argument:

Our continuing review of CSR literature and best practices leads us to two basic conclusions. First, although the scholarly literature and best practices commentary often treat CSR as a singular concept with universal meaning, the reality is that it is a complex quilt cut from different fabrics (¶ 1).

Furthermore, they contend scholars and publics must be aware of corporations that are using CSR as marketing or image repair strategy versus a community centered strategy focused on addressing societal needs.

Another pervasive gap in the literature on CSR and community relations relates to participation. Scholars contend community relations requires direct participation from

the community in order to be successful, but a CSR strategy may not require the active participation of the community on all fronts (Banks, 1995; Burke, 1999; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Seitel, 2004). The organization is expected to participate in and support ongoing community initiatives in addition to participating responsibly in community affairs. However, there are also some expectations held by the organization, including support for the business and the products or services they produce, (Burke, 1999; Seitel, 2004). J. Grunig and Huang (2000) expanded on this argument and added two-way communication and relationship building is the primary component for community relations to foster and grow mutually beneficial relationships, and requires active participation on behalf of both parties. Furthermore, Banks (1995) argued organizations must allow some level of participation on behalf of their publics in order to avoid stereotypical and hegemonic dominance. The idea of direct participation is a key difference when examining CSR and community relations programs and their impact on the organization.

CSR and Sports

There is a small but growing body of literature on CSR in sports. Babiak (2010) argued CSR in sport is different from other industries and that previous CSR research may not be sufficient to explain motivations and impacts in the sport industry. The author found this especially true regarding professional sports franchises. Sheth and Babiak (2010) said “one look at a professional sport team’s webpage and other communication vehicles indicates that CSR has become an integral part of these organizations’ business functions” (p. 435-436). Babiak (2010) therefore argued “[p]rofessional sport is a rich context in which to study CSR because a great majority of the organizations in the industry are involved in such efforts” (p 529). The author also

found CSR includes more than just doing good for fans and people in the community. She argued “[t]hese functions are of vital importance to sport leagues and so while CSR may not always directly impact the bottom line, it appears to be a strategy employed to enhance a number of aspects of the business of sport” (p. 544).

Babiak and Wolfe (2009) explained “some stakeholders have higher (or different) perceptions of the role and responsibility of professional sport teams and leagues to provide social benefit and ‘give back’ to the community” (p. 7). Furthermore, the authors provided four major reasons why CSR in sports differs from other industries.

- First, is the passion and interest of the product (teams, players, coaches) from the community, which is “leading to increased awareness of socially responsible messaging” (p. 8).
- Second, the economic structure and impact each team has on its local community. Including the “special protections professional sport leagues/teams receive from the government” (p. 7).
- Third, is transparency, when team decisions and mishaps are placed into the media and public spotlight honesty, trust and transparency become increasingly important.
- Finally, stakeholder management, because “relationships with stakeholders such as the media, players, various levels of government, sponsors, suppliers, fans, and local communities, can benefit from CSR activities” (p. 8).

The authors also explained the social and legal benefits, both perceived and actual, that teams are granted “leads some stakeholders to have higher (or different) perceptions of the role and responsibility of professional sport teams and leagues to provide social benefit and ‘give back’ to the community” (p. 7).

Sheth and Babiak (2010) examined professional sport executives to determine how they define CSR, and how they prioritize CSR activities. The authors found “professional sport executives approach CSR in a community-oriented, collaborative, and strategic manner in order to achieve their ethical, philanthropic, and legal

responsibilities” (p. 446). The authors also found that CSR platforms implemented by sports teams benefit both internal and external stakeholders “that is, employees, athletes, fans, customers, corporate sponsors, and local communities” (p. 446). Furthermore, the authors found the executives placed an emphasis on the local community. “While sport executives felt that philanthropy was a significant part of their CSR efforts, respondents also strongly felt that a community-focused approach was important in the practice of their CSR” (p. 442). The authors explained identifying the local community as a focal point of CSR efforts could help the team strategically “with a stronger and more loyal customer base” (p. 442).

Sheth and Babiak (2010) also found a significant link between a team’s performance and the importance placed on CSR by team executives. “A team that is successful on the playing field (or perhaps in other aspects of their business) may not need the image-enhancing or relationship building function that provided by CSR activities (p. 447). The authors suggest good performance by a team will supersede CSR efforts in terms of benefits provided by the organization. However, they did point out “a losing team might want to maintain their name and brand in the community in which they operate, and may use the CSR function to do so” (p. 447). These findings support the argument by Maignan and Ferrell (2004) that CSR in sports is still thought of as a cause-related marketing strategy. The authors did not indicate a cause-related marketing strategy was prevalent, but rather that CSR could be used for that purpose if necessary (Babiak, 2010; Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Sheth & Babiak, 2010).

Corporate social responsibility in sports offers unique opportunities for scholars to examine how the organization directs and influences CSR behaviors. Furthermore, it

offers insight into how professional teams engage in community activities to “both fulfill stakeholder expectations and to remain competitive” (Babiak, 2010, p. 547). Finally, corporate social responsibility in the sport industry seems to be a business priority, but also appears to be distinctive from other organizations and industries with similar economic and social impact (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). The uniqueness of the industry offers many research opportunities for scholars with a multitude of variables to examine.

Community as a Theory

To better understand the public relations and community relations function, the construct of community must be examined. Community is broadly defined and Hallahan (2004) found 11 definitions for the term. Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) also found difficulty when defining the term, but argued that it may be a result of “the loss of community resulting from new means of communication and transportation” (p. xi). J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) noted that the term was often associated with a variety of meanings in previous public relations literature, but two primary meanings seem to have presented themselves. The authors make the case that community can be thought of in two ways, either as a locality or as a nongeographic community of common purpose, interests, or beliefs, such as the scientific community or the business community. In today’s society the addition of many online communities exist as well (Nair, 2004). J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) explained, “Nearly all community relations programs are designed for the first kind of community. The second definition of community is essentially the definition we have given to a public—a group with a common problem or interest, regardless of geographic location” (p. 286).

Etzioni (1996) argues that the first kind of community, as a locality, is insufficient and community should be thought of as a set of attributes rather than as a concrete

place such as a neighborhood or city. Hallahan (2004) arrived at the same conclusion as previous scholars (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and postulated that two distinct types of community exist, the first is a geographic community based on location, such as a city, town, state or country. While sports teams are probably more focused on local communities the second type of community, symbolic community consisting of fans is also important to consider.

Drawing on the work of Cohen (1985), Hallahan (2004) explained “Cohen argues that a community exists exclusively in people's minds and is rooted in its symbolic constituents--without regard to place” (p. 9). In fact, Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) said “a fundamental reason why public relations practice exists today is the loss of [geographic] community resulting from new means of communication and transportation” (p. xi). This conclusion is, perhaps, truer today because of the global nature of our society and the connections we have created over the Internet, especially through the use of social media. Furthermore, the authors postulated that public relations is “better defined and practiced as the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community” (1988, p. XI). The relationships created in a community are regarded as the outcomes of public relations programming.

Hallahan (2004) further explained Cohen’s work by arguing community is built by the experience of its members and “if the members of a community comes to feel they have less in common with one another than they do with members of another community, the integrity of the community becomes impugned” (p. 10). Sports fans fit uniquely into this description as they define their community by the team they support. Hallahan (2004) also explained that community-as-a-locality builds the foundations for

much of the early research in American sociology, notably the work of sociologists at the University of Chicago in the 1890s. However, he noted that this early research determined this theory of community was inadequate. “Subsequent community research steadily has shifted away from a geographic basis to emphasize cultural aspects of community” (p. 9). Additionally, the author laid out his argument for why community fits as a public relations theory:

Pragmatically, as a concept for the practice of public relations, community links the field to an idea and an ideal that is widely and positively accepted in the everyday world. Community strikes a resonating chord among most individuals, particularly contrasted with sterile alternatives such as market, publics, or audiences. People want to feel they are part of a community (p. 12).

Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) explained also that using community as a theory produces an alternate approach to community relations “that directly stimulates and actively attempts to restore and maintain a sense of community” (p. 26). And according to Hallahan (2004), “[c]ommunity nurturing involves fostering the economic, political, social and cultural vitality of communities in which people and organizations or causes are members - beyond mere involvement expected of an organization as one of many community members” (p. 49). Kruckeberg and Starck (1988) go so far as to argue that public relations primary function should be to return a sense of community that has been lost on society. The authors conclude that through the use of community relations programs, businesses “would realize their organizational goals through such activities” (p. 25).

Most of the literature pertaining to community as a theory explains commitment to community should be carried out for mutually beneficial reasons. The result of this programming are outcomes that positively impact both the organization and the

community (Seitel, 2004; Hallahan, 2004). Communities can be thought of in terms of complex relationships between groups and specifically organizations and individuals (K.A. Leeper, 1996; R. Leeper, 2001). This idea is also brought forth by Etzioni (1996) who said “[c]ommunities are often viewed as social webs, in which people are attached to one another by crisscrossing relationships rather than by one-to-one relationships” (p. 123). This idea is common and discussed in detail in public relations literature (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2000; J. Grunig, 1992; Seitel, 2004).

Culbertson and Chen (1997) have established six tenants, three of which help increase the understanding of community as a theory within the public relations field and include:

- Community requires a sense of interconnectedness and social cohesion.
- Community requires that all citizens have a feeling of empowerment—of involvement in making and implementing decisions that bear on their lives.
- Community requires a broadening of one’s social world—one’s array of significant others—so as to reduce fragmentation and enhance breadth of perspective (p. 36-41).

The authors explained one of the best ways for organizations to successfully create trust and empowerment among citizens can be accomplished by providing information to the community. By doing so, the organization fosters dialogue and participation with the community. As a result, community members and publics can make their own informed decisions concerning their relationship with the organization. Culbertson and Chen (1996) added that taking “this approach means that the organization does more than ask the community to trust it. This approach means helping the community to develop resources and institutions so that it can rely on itself, not on the organization” (p. 102).

A significant amount of literature exists dedicated to discussing the links between the two-way symmetrical model of public relations and community. As discussed, participation is essential in community relations. Seitel, (2004) explained “[r]esearchers have found communication is most persuasive when it comes from multiple sources of high credibility. Credibility itself is a multidimensional concept that includes trustworthiness, expertise, and power” (p. 185). J. Grunig (2001) came to the conclusion that a symmetrical practice of public relations embraces and reinforces the values of community. The author also explained “the public relations function should promote the value of collectivism in what typically are individualistic organizations- especially in countries with individualistic cultures like the United States” (as cited in L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Dozier, 2002, p. 322). Culbertson and Chen (1996) were also champions of the theory that the model of analysis should be the community rather than the individual. The authors said “two-way symmetrical communication is necessary for that construction and for the development and analysis of community” (p. 104). Furthermore, J. Grunig, L. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) argued the community model of public relations “shares the same presumptions as the symmetrical model” (p. 321). The two-way symmetrical model proposed by J. Grunig (1992) and L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Dozier (2002) is explained as:

Symmetrical public relations occurs in situations where groups come together to protect and enhance their self-interests. Argumentation, debate and persuasion take place. But dialogue, listening, understanding, and relationship building also happen because they are more effective in resolving conflict than are one-way attempts at compliance gaining (p. 321).

Examining community as a theory in public relations provides an alternative view, but one that can also be incorporated into the practice today. It may be particularly relevant to sports teams who must deal with both a geographic community and a community of

fans and supporters who connect from around the world. This perspective provides a unique understanding of potential publics and shareholders with which an organization depends on for success (Hallahan, 2004; Kruckeberg, 2001; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988; K.A. Leeper, 1996; R. Leeper, 2001)

Measurement

In order to understand the contributions of community relations, programs should be measured against existing objectives and goals. Measurement provides data and analysis of the success of a team's community programs and the impact they have on the community and organization. The purpose of evaluation is, according to Lakin and Scheubel (2010) to prove that your community projects are making a real difference in society. Stacks (2002) explained "measurement occurs when we observe something. Formal measurement requires that as precisely as possible we state how we are measuring what we observed" (p. 128).

Measurement has long been a challenging area for public relations practitioners and scholars (Ferguson, 1984; Hon 1998). However, measurement and evaluation provide practitioners with reliable data that express both value to the organization and understanding of audiences. Wilcox and Cameron (2009) explained that there has been a great shift and focus on systematic measurement of public relations programs in order to explain to clients and employers "exactly what has been accomplished" (p. 195). Furthermore, measurement links directly to the organization's goals and mission.

Van Ruler, A. Verčič, and D. Verčič (2008) described much of the research performed by practitioners in the field of public relations as lacking in formality. The authors noted there is very little scientific or statistical analysis going on in day to day business and argued that many practitioners are simply using their instincts or

experience to tell them if the program has been a success. Despite overwhelming numbers that support thorough evaluation techniques, the authors explained, “a common measurement tool for doing research is the ‘eyes and ears’ method” (p. 1). In addition, the authors explained that conclusions in the professional field are often drawn without “systematically planning the research or analyzing the results” (p. 1). The focus on evaluation comes from the broad question originally postulated by Pavlik (1987) “[w]hat can public relations contribute to overall organizational effectiveness” (as cited in Van Ruler et al., 2008, p. 1). Particularly relevant to this research is another idea from Pavlik (1987) that there should also be a measure of “[w]hat can public relations contribute to society as a whole?” (p. 2).

In order to answer both those questions, many scholars (Ferguson, 1984; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Hon, 1998; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999) have spent decades contributing to the development of effective tools and instruments. The research has uncovered items that measure more than how many media impressions or Internet hits are accumulated. These questions can be answered by measuring something deeper and more meaningful to the organization. Ferguson (1984) called for relationships to be the primary unit of measurement in the field. Additionally, after a review of prior public relations research, Pavlik (1987) argued that measuring relationships would help to determine public relations’ value and contribution to the organization. Since that time, many scholars (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Hon & J. Grunig, 1998; Hon & Ki, 2007) have focused on developing reliable scales to accurately measure relationships between organizations and their stakeholders. A key part of the definition of both public

relations and community relations is creating lasting relationships with targeted publics (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009).

Outputs and Outcomes

While it may seem basic, it is particularly important to this study to understand the difference between outputs and outcomes. Spencer and Jahansoozi (2008) explained that measuring and evaluating outputs is the most basic level of analyzing the success or failure of a campaign. These measures are necessary and often used as the programs “visible results” (p. 183). With regards to community relations Lakin and Scheubel (2010) argued that the project will not be complete with out proper measurement and evaluation. The authors explained that “you can’t manage what you don’t measure” (p. 195) this includes both outputs and outcomes.

Outputs

Outputs can be thought of as anything including but certainly not limited to; advertisements, news releases, newspaper clippings, news stories, other media mentions, Internet hits, return on investment (ROI), advertising equivalency, and any other tracking techniques used to specifically measure the quantity of items produced. Practitioners often measure what these items could be worth in advertising dollars, known as advertising equivalency (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). J. Grunig (2008) stated that ROI has received a great amount of attention in the professional world. He pointed out that some practitioners and scholars find outputs can best demonstrate the benefits of public relations programming to management in financial terms, something many CEOs are more familiar with. He argued, however, ROI can only be assessed at the organizational level and does not account for two-way symmetrical communication practices. Therefore, using ROI as the only measurement technique may not be

enough to adequately evaluate the communications programming or in this case community relations programming.

Outputs should not be thought of as invaluable and there are benefits to measuring them. Wilcox and Cameron (2009) argued measuring outputs, or “the production approach” (p. 196) helps specify what practitioners and professionals should accomplish in terms of media coverage. Furthermore, evaluation of production can provide incentives, and are a “tangible criteria for evaluating employee performance” (p. 197). These items are typically measured quantitatively, simply in terms of numbers, without producing any further understanding. Measuring these items can also help provide the organization with evaluation of resources and time spent.

Wilcox and Cameron (2009) also explained that the “most widely used and practiced form of evaluating public relations programs is the compilation of print and broadcast mentions” (p. 197). Furthermore, the authors mentioned tracking the distribution of messages is as important as tracking the production of publicity materials. This literature suggests that there is a gap between theory and practice but does not examine why professionals do not undertake more in-depth evaluations of programming. Based on the Ferguson (1984) theory that long-term relationships with key publics should be the goal of public relations programming, measuring outputs does very little in terms of showing the organization or the stakeholders how well those relationships are being built or maintained.

Outcomes

In order to gain a deeper understanding and provide evidence of value in the form of long-term relationships, outcomes, also known, as impacts must be measured. J. Grunig (2008) argued that using qualitative methods to analyze and interpret

information helps form public relations programs. “In addition to quantitative measures that can be used in survey research, we also have developed qualitative measures for the indicators that can be used both in formative and evaluative research on the quality of relationships” (p. 109). Additionally, Spencer and Jahansoozi (2008) pointed out “measuring and evaluating outcomes [such as attitude and behavior change] provides a far more sophisticated look at whether the persuasive communication message was successful” (p. 183). While community relations is often more about actual events and programs than messages, the importance of relationships should still be examined.

Measuring outcomes is the best way to successfully provide tangible evidence of the value that public relations and community relations programming bring to the organization (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Lakin & Scheubel, 2010). Specifically, it can provide reliable data about concepts often thought of as intangible or immeasurable. Lakin and Scheubel (2010) argued the collection of data should be as comprehensive as possible and “the purpose is to capture all areas in which your company runs or funds programs, projects, and activities that affect your communities” (p. 204). Additionally, the authors explained that outcomes are about the difference that the programming made which will require baseline assessments, formative research and usually requires a qualitative assessment. This should be done in addition to quantitative research, in order to fully evaluate the programming against stated goals and objectives.

Outcomes can be thought of as impacts, which Lakin and Scheubel (2010) described as “the potential longer-term effects for beneficiaries and in society overall” (p. 197). The authors pointed out that measurement and evaluation is a planning tool to

help management “both prove and improve outcomes and impact of overall Community Involvement and specific programs, in terms of both societal results and business benefits” (p. 195). This tool will be more effective if it measures the community impact as it relates to the goals and mission. Most scholars have accepted that while measuring both outputs and outcomes is necessary, it is more difficult to measure outcomes, but is also more comprehensive (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Hon & J. Grunig, 1998; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Lakin & Scheubel, 2010; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009).

Measuring Relationships

Public relations scholars have advocated systems that measure relationships in order to better understand the overall impact on stakeholders. Kleinnijenhuis (2008) explained that relationships between the organization and the stakeholder publics are useful and can provide measurable components. The author described, in terms of research that “the key dependent variable [in public relations] is relationships” (p. 60). As this theoretical perspective has gained support and attention from many scholars (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Hon & Ki, 2007) several scales, designed to measure the relationships between publics and the organization, have been designed. Starting with Hon (1998) and in subsequent studies both the reliability and validity of those constructs has been evaluated (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Ki, 2007).

J. Grunig (1992; 2001; 2006; 2008) highlighted the importance of supportive and positive relationships in public relations. The argument for providing value to the organization and subsequently the impact of public relations has come down to

measuring positive relationships with publics. J. Grunig (2008) described the foundations of the evaluation of relationships:

Since the value of public relations to an organization and society exists in the relationships developed with strategic publics, objectives should consist of strategies to cultivate relationships (independent variables) and the relationship outcomes (dependant variables) that the organization strives to achieve with these strategies (p. 104).

Furthermore, he explained that there are two types of objectives. "Cultivation strategies can be specified as process objectives while relationship outcomes can be specified as outcome objectives" (p. 104). If organizations and practitioners are going to practice effective public relations, then they should begin by "evaluating programs and public relations functions by their success in producing quality relationships" (J. Grunig, 1992, p. 105). The long-term relationships are necessary for organizations to succeed and have become the foundation for success of public relations programs (J. Grunig 1992).

Bruning and Ledingham (1998) identified five dimensions that can be measured (open communication, the level of trust, the level of involvement, investment in community, and long-term commitment). These dimensions have an influence on a public's perceived relationship with an organization and are particularly important when talking about evaluating community programs. Additionally, the authors explained that long-term commitment can be thought of as long-term relationship management. According to Ledingham (2006) mutually beneficial relationships can "generate economic, societal, and political gain both for organizations and publics" (as cited in Levenshus, 2010, p. 315).

Expanding on the work of Bruning and Ledingham (1998) Hon and J. Grunig (1999) identified six indicators of quality long-term relationships (control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, communal relationship). Additionally,

the authors identified these constructs as two separate types of relationships, (symmetrical and asymmetrical) and four relationship outcomes (control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment). The authors explained:

In a communal relationship, both parties provide benefits to the others because they are concerned about the welfare of the other — even when they get nothing in return. The role of public relations is to convince management that it also needs communal relationships ... as well as exchange relationships with customers (p. 22).

The authors argued that by measuring relationships using these constructs, “public relations professionals can contribute insights such as this to the management of their organizations and demonstrate the value of strategic public relations” (p. 35).

Additionally, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) created a seven-item scale to measure communal relationships with organizations. Hallahan (2004) reviewed these items and explained that while communal relationships are ideal “importantly, communal relationships are not altogether altruistic” (p. 39). This suggests the motives behind relationship building may not always be in the best interest of the community. However, Hon and J. Grunig (1999) found that when communal relationships exist, they serve as a strong indicator of overall success in relationship building. The authors said “developing communal relationships with key constituencies is much more important to achieve than would be developing exchange relationships” (p. 6).

Ledingham and Bruning (2000) closely examined five relational dimensions that revealed themselves as effective predictors for future relationships. Among their findings the relationship between citizens in a small community and a large organization were examined. The study examined individuals’ perceptions of organizations in the context of the community (trust, investment, commitment, involvement, and openness). The authors found these items were particularly important in understandings of

perceptions of relationships with the organization as related to community relationships. Therefore, in order to measure the impact of community relations programming implemented by professional sports teams, it seems logical that relationships should be one of the major units of analysis.

Hon and Ki (2007) expanded on the constructs measured by Ledingham and Bruning (2000). Their findings suggested a public's perception of a satisfying relationship with an organization will predict their "attitudes towards the organization and, ultimately, behavioral intentions" (p. 4). These behavioral intentions are most likely based on past interactions with the organization and the perceived relationship with key publics including community members and citizens in local communities and can be positive, negative, or neutral. The type of relationship is up to the organization and will ultimately affect behavior as well (Hon and J. Grunig, 1999; Hon & Ki, 2007). Hon and J. Grunig (1999) suggested that past experiences have an enormous effect on what type of relationship is built between an organization and its key publics, in this case community members and team. "An exchange relationship exists when one party gives benefits to the other because the other gave benefits in the past or expects to do so in the future," (p. 3). Therefore, community relations programs should adopt strategies that allow for relationship cultivation over an extended time period, directed at creating benefits to both society and the organization (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000).

In order to increase the reliability of the measurement, Kleinnijenhuis (2008) argued that simply measuring whether or not a relationship between the organization and the publics exists does not provide reliable data. The author suggested that three

additional aspects of measuring relationships should be incorporated in the qualitative analysis:

Frequency, the average degree of positiveness/negativity of an interaction within a given time-span, the ambiguity (within variance) of those positiveness/negativity of interactions within a given time-span, as well as the inconsistency, also labeled as divergence (between variance), of these interactions (p. 66).

This suggestion creates more reliability and validity of measurement data for the programming and will also provide more detail for future planning and benchmarking.

Symmetrical Measurement

Community relations programs, just as public relations programs, are most effective when there is symmetry in the communication and implementation process (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, & Dozier, 2002). This is not a new concept; nearly three decades ago Yarrington (1983) argued that organizations have become aware that their success is directly linked to that of the community. The good relationships created between one another can determine the success or failure of a company. In addition, the author stated “those good relationships rest on two-way communication-the organization talking to the community and listening to the community’s responses” (p. xv).

J. Grunig (2008) agreed and argued that not all public relations strategies are equally effective when it comes to cultivating relationships. Accordingly, not all programming will produce equally effective and quality relationships. In this way he pointed out that the communications programming should be symmetrical because symmetrical cultivation strategies are generally more effective than asymmetrical ones. J. Grunig (2008) defined symmetrical communications “to be symmetrical means that the public relations staff communicates in a way that helps to balance the interests of both organization and publics” (p. 104). The author also stated “at the functional level of

analysis, a public relations department should conduct research to evaluate itself-how it is organized and what it does” (p. 111). Additionally, the structure and behavior of the public relations function should make it possible to contribute maximally to both organizational and societal effectiveness. Lakin and Scheubel (2010) supported his claim and postulate that participation is necessary. They said “participative approaches are about doing research not only on people, but also with people, involving beneficiaries in designing and understanding the research” (p. 198). The authors supported the argument by adding that participatory strategies may increase accuracy of programming assessments and that it can also help uncover “the very experiences that were most important to [your public]” (p. 198).

J. Grunig (2008) described the hierarchy of communications objectives in terms of symmetrical, two-way communications in the following way:

- Exposure to the message becomes mutual awareness. Both management and public are aware of the effect they have on the other.
- Message retention becomes accuracy. Both can accurately remember and repeat what the other said.
- Cognitive effect becomes understanding. Both have similar cognitions about a problem or issue or purpose of the organization.
- Effect on attitude becomes agreement. Both have similar evaluations of what the organization or public wants and intend to behave in a way that enhances their relationship.
- Effect on behavior becomes symbiotic behavior. Both behave in a way that serves the interests of the organization (p. 106-107)

The author explained these measures can be used as indicators of the overall quality of the relationships they have created and built with strategic publics, including community members.

Hallahan (2004) determined that measuring relationships is a viable unit of evaluation. He explained, based on literature from Hon and J. Grunig (1999), that public relations is in fact striving to create lasting communal relationships as opposed to simple exchange relationships:

Besides explicit calls for a community-based focus, researchers now address community indirectly under the aegis of symmetrical, dialogic and transactional communications; collaboration, collectivism, and social corporatism; and relationship management (p. 54).

Bruning, Langenhop, & Green, 2004, conducted research showing tactics will be more effective for practitioners when they:

Must design relationship-building programs that (a) engage public members and the organization in a highly interactive process, (b) fulfill the needs and expectations of both the public and the organization, and (c) provide benefit to both the public and the organization (p. 341).

In order to understand what impacts each individual team or league is achieving, measurement and evaluation of the strategies are necessary and should be performed regularly. “The staff should conduct regular evaluative research to assess the effects of its communication programs on these relationships with strategic publics” J. Grunig said (2008, p. 107). The ultimate goal J. Grunig (2008) argued of communication programs such as community relations is a “quality relationship with a strategic public” (p. 105). Symmetry provides practitioners with a better understanding of the publics they serve. Incorporating symmetrical practices in the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of community relations programs may help to enhance relationships with stakeholders.

Summary of Literature Review

The review of this literature centered on community relations, CSR in professional sports, community, and measurement in public relations. The emphasis on community

as not only a public but also as a basis for theory in public relations (Hallahan, 2004; Kruckeberg, 2006; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988) represents a well established, if not widely accepted foundation for analysis. Measuring relationships has been established and accepted as the most effective way to demonstrate the value of public relations to the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 1998; Bruning, et al., 2004; Ferguson, 1984; Hon, 1998; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Using these public relations theories and protocols for evaluation and measurement will provide a useful foundation to examine community relations programs in professional sports. Community relations research has only been examined briefly in the field of professional sports. Research suggests much of the programming is being used as cause-related marketing or as a tool for image and reputation repair strategies (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). Furthermore, there is only a small amount of literature dedicated to community relations in both sports and public relations literature. Because of the lack of relevant research and data on professional sports and community relations, this study will add to the body of literature on a broad topic. Hopefully, the study creates a better understanding of this subject in academia and the professional world.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were selected using a convenience sample from what is considered to be the four major U.S. sports leagues (National Hockey League – NHL, National Football League – NFL, Major League Baseball – MLB, and National Basketball Association – NBA) consisting of a total population of 122 sports teams. Of the 122 existing professional sports franchises, the researcher was able to contact the community relations departments of 67 teams through email or by phone, using team websites to obtain contact information to recruit potential participants. Participation was limited only to employees of community relations departments on each team.

Based on a preliminary review of team websites it was determined that community relations departments are often involved in their team's charitable and nonprofit foundation activities as well. However, foundation employees, directors, or board members were not recruited if they had no official employment position with the team. The study targeted community relations directors and managers as they have more decision-making powers within the organization. However, due to scheduling and time constraints, any available employee in the community relations department who was willing to participate was included in the study. As a result participation was completely voluntary and participants represent community relations departments from their respective teams.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire administered through in-depth interviews conducted via telephone. Interview times averaged 41 minutes and

were used in a qualitative analysis to help determine how community relations programming is evaluated and what metrics are being used to measure relationships between the team and local community. The interview instrument (Appendix C) consisted of 23 questions and was designed to prompt comprehensive responses from participants. The target number of interviews was set at 20, which equated to 16.3 percent of the total population. However, only 13 participants (representing 14 teams) responded during the recruiting process.

The telephone interview required participants to define community and community relations and describe what is included in their team's programming. Additionally participants were asked to respond to:

- One question about motivation for community programming
- One question about standardization
- One questions on recent changes to the program
- One question on organizational structure
- Four questions about the importance of community relations to the team
- Three questions related to the team's evaluation procedures
- Two questions about participation and two-way communication
- One question about the strength of the team's relationship with the community
- One question about multicultural relations'
- One question about social media
- One question pertaining to community partnerships
- Four demographic questions

Based on a review of the relevant literature on community relations, CSR and sports, multicultural relations, and measurement, several specific themes have emerged. These themes offer an idea and loose framework to begin creating an inventory of best practices and traits of successful community relations programs. These practices aim to build mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and their local community. The questions for the in-depth interview are based on the theories, concepts, and ideas of two-way communication, participation,

community/collective good, measuring relationships and outcomes, as well as relationship building. These pervasive themes provided the baseline for the questionnaire. Additionally, several questions have been adopted from a previous study which investigated community relations and college sports (Francis, 2007). The questions were designed to create a better understanding of community relations programs in professional sports franchises.

Procedures and Data Collection

The interview questions were submitted for IRB approval on April 1, 2012 and approved on April 20, 2012 under protocol number 2012-U-0452 (See Appendix A). Participants were recruited beginning May 21, 2012 using contact information available on team websites. Potential participants were recruited either through phone calls or email depending on available contact information. Direct email was the preferred method of contact. However, a majority of teams did not list individual email for employees. In those cases phone calls were utilized to recruit participants. If neither email nor phone numbers were available, a general submission to the team's email was sent. This method was used to contact a total of 15 teams, but with no responses from that group a decision was made to stop using that method to recruit participants. Out of 122 teams 67 were contacted to recruit participants and 13 responded representing 14 total teams and 13 cities across the country. One participant was the director for both NHL team and NBA team with same owner in their specific city.

Based on a preliminary review of all 122 teams, the researcher determined that the teams are located in 47 cities throughout the United States and Canada. Of the 122 teams, nine franchises are located in Canada (seven hockey teams, and one each in basketball and baseball) but no Canadian teams participated in this study. While some

team's ownership groups own multiple franchises including minor league affiliates and other professional sports such as soccer and lacrosse, the study does not include any teams other than those in the four "major" professional sports.

Interviews took place between May 30 and June 22, 2012. Respondents participated voluntarily without receiving any benefits and were recruited using a convenience sample. As soon as the informed consent (Appendix B) form was accepted by the principal investigator, participants were able to select their interview time and date and the participant's contact information was collected. This included name, phone number, and email address. An email requesting confirmation of the date and time of the interview was sent to participants. Email reminders of the upcoming interview were sent to participants prior to the interview date, four days (first email) and one day (second email).

To ensure the participant's privacy and increase the likelihood of open responses, the names of participants and teams, as well as locations, were not included in the data collection or analysis. This approach allowed respondents to be more forthcoming and provide open-ended answers. However, it may have negatively impacted the presentation of results and findings. Allison, Okun, and Dutridge (2002) explained open-ended style of questioning helps investigators to identify motives that may not arise or are difficult to test for on a fixed-choice rating scale, which is one of the primary reasons for this method. More than half of the respondents stipulated that their participation was based on the ability to review the questions prior to the interview and that request was granted. This provided more time for participants to reflect on the answers and gain a better understanding of the goals of the study.

In an effort to increase the accuracy of the interviews, a member check was performed throughout each interview to ensure that proper interpretation of the answers was recorded. By reviewing the answers with the respondent, the researcher ensured more accurate results and eliminated any errors or misunderstandings. Each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder and hand written notes. Following the conclusion of the interviews, each conversation was transcribed by the principle investigator and again reviewed for accuracy. The target number of participants for the study was between 20 and 25. However, due to a high level of saturation of common trends and themes, as well as a lack of responses during the recruiting process, the number of participants who elected to participate in the in the phone interview was only 13 (14 teams).

Data Analysis

A conceptual content analysis was selected as a measure of qualitative analysis of the in-depth telephone interviews. Stacks (2002) explained “content analysis allows researchers to review qualitative data in a quantitative manner” (p. 112). Additionally, Walizer and Wiener (1978) defined content analysis as any type of systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information. Krippendorff (1980) defined it as a research technique for making replicable and valid references from data to their context and the application of this research technique is practical for the current study.

Stacks (2002) explained content analysis is “particularly appropriate for the analysis of documents, speeches, media releases, video content and scripts, interviews and focus groups” (pp. 107-108). The in-depth interview data were analyzed using a

conceptual content analysis and in accordance with guidelines for categorizing content as explained by Stacks (2002) which included:

1. The categories reflect the research purpose.
2. Second, the categories are exhaustive.
3. The categories are mutually exclusive and a category for “other” has made this possible.
4. The placement in the categories is independent from other categories.
5. The categories reflect one classification system, i.e. everything can be included under the community relations function and definitions provided in the literature review.

Carley (1993) also introduced eight steps of conceptual content analysis (as cited in Francis, 2007, p. 51) which include:

1. Decide the level of analysis.
2. Decide how many concepts to code for.
3. Decide whether to code for existence or frequency of a concept.
4. Decide on how you will distinguish among concepts.
5. Develop rules for coding your texts.
6. Decide what to do with "irrelevant" information.
7. Code the texts.
8. Analyze your results.

The unit of analysis for this research is the transcripts and recordings from the 13 in-depth interviews with employees of community relations departments. Following the interviews the recordings were transcribed, reviewed, and edited for accuracy. The transcripts were reviewed for phrases rather than single words as the level of analysis. Concepts were most often represented by these phrases. However, there was no predetermined number of concepts to examine in the content. Preliminary reviews of team websites and familiarity with the subject brought forth some ideas for concepts, but a system of emergent coding was utilized. This process provided more flexibility and freedom when reviewing the transcripts for common themes. Selective reduction, a

system of identifying recurring words, phrases and concepts was utilized during the process to ensure accuracy and understanding.

To account for any inconsistencies in the coding, phrases utilizing similar words and concepts were maintained among every transcript and recording. Interview transcripts were reviewed three separate times to increase both the validity and reliability of concepts and to manage inconsistent ideas. Following the review of the recordings and the transcripts it was determined that all of the information contained in the transcripts including incomplete and no-response answers were relevant to the present study and provided valuable insights to providing answers to the research questions presented above. The results from this conceptual content analysis are used in a descriptive manner in order to convey important ideas and trends within community relations departments in professional sports franchises.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate how community relations programs in professional sports franchises define concepts such as community, evaluate the success or failures of community relations programming, and how they measure the relationship between the team and the community. The study also examined other distinctive characteristics of community relations. Those included two-way communications, dialogue, community participation, and multicultural relations. This chapter contains the analysis and interpretation of the data collected during qualitative interviews with 13 participants responsible for community relations programming for 14 different teams in the four major professional sports. The results are presented in order by research question.

Respondent Profile

The study collected demographic data including job title, head of department, position tenure and education level. The respondents represented teams from all four major professional sports including: five NFL, five NBA, three NHL, and one MLB. The results are presented in Table 4-1.

The majority of respondents (61.5%) identified themselves as either directors or vice presidents. Two respondents (15.3%) reported they were assistant directors with another two (15.3%) stating they served as community relations coordinators. Finally just one reported they served as a manager accounting for 7.6 percent.

Nearly 77 percent of respondents (N=10) identified themselves as the head of the community relations department. The remaining 23 percent were not in charge of the community relations departments.

Just over 15 percent of respondents (N=2) reported they had been in their current position with the team between two and five years. Five more (38.4%) reported they had served between 6-10 years and finally 46.1 percent (N=6) reported they had been with their team for more than 10 years. The average reported length of time in respondent's current position was 9.2 years.

Only 10 respondents provided answers to this question. Seventy percent (N=7) responded they had attained a bachelor's degree. Two respondents (20%) had earned a master's degree and one participant (10%) indicated they had completed junior college.

Table 4-1. Respondent Profile

Respondent Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Position Title (N=13)		
Director/Vice President	8	61.5
Assistant Director	2	15.3
Manager	1	7.6
Coordinator	2	15.3
Department Head (N=13)		
Yes	10	76.9
No	3	23.0
Position Tenure (N=13)		
0-1 Years	0	0.0
2-5 Years	2	15.3
6-10 years	5	38.4
10 + Years	6	46.1
Highest Level of Education Attained (N=10)		
Bachelors	7	70.0
Masters	2	20.0
Junior College	1	10.0

Conceptual Content Analysis

A conceptual content analysis was used to analyze the transcripts of 13 structured telephone interviews. The results of the content analysis revealed many recurring responses in the data. The results are presented in order by research question.

- RQ 1. How do professional sports franchises define community and community relations?

Responses for this question varied and about half of participants had more than one response. Responses fit into three categories which were defined by geographic boundaries and included: greater metro areas, state borders, and broadly defined geographic areas. One respondent mentioned that the team catered to a large community:

We work with a variety of communities not just in [our community] but also around the world. A lot of our programs are designed to serve the people in the city and greater [city] area. Our fans are not specific sets of people so we try to reach out as far as we can to impact as many people as we can (Phone interview, June 6, 2012).

Another team mentioned their community crossed the border into Canada, “We have a trip going to Canada and Alaska next week” (Phone Interview, June 17, 2012). Every respondent defined community by some sort of geographic location. Two respondents mentioned the groups of people who make up a community in their definition but still identified community by geographic area. Eleven of the fourteen teams came from states with only one team in their respective sport. Each of these teams defined community as the entire state, but most did not mention programming anywhere but the city or metro area where they were located. One respondent also included their own team in the definition of community. “Our fans live for this team, we helped rebuild this

city and you can see that in our fan base. In a lot of ways the team is the community, but we serve a huge geographic area as well” (Phone interview, June 22, 2012).

The respondent’s definition of community relations also elicited a variety of responses, which exposed four dominant themes and included: meeting the needs of fans, supporting the community, participation with the community, and improving the lives of people. One respondent said:

Our players, coaches and staff are active participants in the community, dedicating over 1,000 hours of their time to visiting schools, hosting youth sports clinics, lifting the spirits of young patients in the hospital and attending fundraising events that benefit the community (Phone interview, May 30, 2012).

Another respondent’s answer did not fit into these categories and said that ownership’s definition was more team centered, explaining, “New management feels like community relations is having the community know and love your players, staff, owners, and coaches and [that is] kind of how moving forward, the organization defines community relations” (Phone Interview, June 6, 2012). Some respondents also explained in their responses that it is important for teams to be “socially responsible,” and act as “good corporate citizens” or “good neighbors” in the community. Another NFL respondent said:

Professional sports provides us with a tremendous platform to bring awareness to causes and provide assistance to our community, from player involvement to our entire business staff, if you ask anyone community involvement is a big part of who we are (Phone interview, June 21, 2012).

The responses indicate a good level of understanding of the benefits and outcomes of community relations.

- RQ 2. What strategies and tactics are professional sports franchises using in their community relations programming?

Respondents were instructed to list major areas of focus that their programs fit in to. Eight categories emerged including: education, health and fitness, military appreciation/support, cancer awareness, player health and safety, eco-friendly programs, player visits to hospitals, schools, and events, and youth sports participation. Two responses included military appreciation/support and in both cases the teams were located in areas with military bases. A few respondents mentioned player health and safety and all three were NFL teams. One participant stated, “the big one now is the NFL with concussion and brain injury stuff, keeping the players safe, and focusing on the health of alumni” (Phone interview, June 6, 2012). One participant from the NBA mentioned or “green initiatives” and said, “Eco-awareness is one of our big three platforms, we have a program called heal the bay, and another called energy night at the [stadium]” (Phone interview, June 6, 2012). The final category, youth sports participation, was also a very common response. Participants mentioned programs such as player camps, outreach, and equipment donations as examples. One participant said, “Our alumni camps are a free program through the city that allows kids to come to the arena. We do 10 per summer and it allows them to get basketball skills from some former players” (Phone interview June 12, 2012).

Every team mentioned youth as the primary participant and target group in community programming. However, it was evident programs reach a variety of publics and demographics and are designed to achieve broad impacts on many groups such as; families, teachers, seniors, and those with disabilities or fighting illnesses. “We have a couple of our big areas of focus, but youth is our number one goal. Anything with the children, we want to try and be a part of it” (Phone interview, June 12, 2012).

Additionally, community relations platforms also all included programs mandated by the league. Every respondent representing the NFL and NBA cited league mandated programs as part of their platform. These programs are those that every team must participate in. The NBA Cares program and NFL Play 60 program were both cited frequently as examples. Participants who mentioned league-mandated programs indicated they were successful and well received by the community. One participant representing the NFL noted, “Play 60 that is a great platform to use and the NFL has done a great job with it” (Phone interview, Jun 6, 2012).

- RQ 2-a. Do community members [publics] and partners [co-sponsors] participate in the decision-making process of community relations programming?

The majority of respondents answered yes. However, about one third of the total population, and more than half of those who answered yes, explained that there is not a formal or official process of participation in place. It was evident from the responses that there were not a lot of programs specifically designed to include community members. The respondent representing two teams NBA and NHL explained, “While we don’t have an official community board participation process, we do get feedback” (Phone interview, May 30, 2012). Four respondents simply answered no to this question. This was most often explained by the team’s corporate structure, with many participants listing owners, board members, and managers as being the primary decision makers.

The responses indicated most of the participant’s community relations departments implement less formal methods of participation such as “getting feedback” and “input” from community partners. Most teams explained feedback typically comes

from nonprofits and co-sponsors of community events that the team works with on a regular basis. One respondent explained:

One of the programs we had started, Health in Hockey, we worked with our partners at YMCA, we were going off of the statistics or thoughts of our partners. So it wasn't involving community leaders or members but it is coming through other organizations that are active and know these people (Phone interview, June 7, 2012).

About half of the participants provided examples of participation from community partners that were utilized to improve programming including: meetings, in-game kiosks, and a variety of requests online. In some cases teams were able to create tailored programs to fit specific community needs. Some respondents who answered yes cited "taking part in planning meetings," "online voting," and "filling donation requests" and "focus groups" with community members as examples of direct participation in the planning process. One respondent said community leaders from nonprofits around the city and state would gather for monthly meetings to plan upcoming events. "We get people in here all the time, community leaders from all over the state, we want to hear their ideas so we have meetings with them about once per month" (Phone interview, June 22, 2012).

A few respondents said that they thought there should be more participation from the community when designing programming. They mentioned that they would like to see more formative research based on the opinions and needs of fans and other community members. One NFL participant said:

I believe all that would need to start with more formal methods to recruit community participants in the planning process. Right now we don't but I think they should, and I think that's important. It's better than working on one specific cause. If that's going on then you are reaching and impacting a lot of different issues and spreading it around in the community (Phone interview, June 6, 2012).

Other respondents stated “better programming” and “achieving greater impact” as the reasons for needing more formative research. Additionally, respondents indicated that greater levels of community participation would bolster existing relationships and were aware of the need to include more participation in their program planning. One respondent representing the NBA explained, “If there was more participation from the teachers we have relationships with, then we can ask them what they need. We are working toward that all the time” (Phone interview, June 6, 2012).

- RQ 3. How do professional sports franchises evaluate community relations programs?

This question also elicited multiple responses from each participant, with all of the respondents providing more than one method of evaluation. Some respondents mentioned three or more methods of evaluation. The focus of measurement was output based and media placement was a common response. Six themes emerged from the responses as indicators of success and included: tracking funds raised/money donated media placement/coverage, program or event attendance, player participation, repeat participation, and follow-ups with grant recipients. Many participants indicated that media coverage was the primary measure of success for programs. A respondent from the NBA said:

We have a service that tracks media and lets us know how much viewership we’ve had and how many people saw a newscast or how many publications the article or coverage went out to. That’s kind of how we measure those things when it comes to community and community programs (Phone interview, June 12, 2012).

Two respondents, both from the NBA, mentioned the use of a third party media monitoring service to track coverage of the team including on social media. One participant from the NBA explained, “I guess you could gauge success by the fact that

everyone always seems to want to come back, whether it's our community program participants or our season ticket holders" (Phone interview, June 6, 2012). Only two respondents explained that they consistently use measurement techniques such as surveys and focus groups with participants, donors, and community partners in order to formally evaluate community programs. An NFL team said, "We track all appearances and submit a survey to partners and participants" (Phone interview, June 16, 2012).

- RQ 3-a. Are there similarities in measurement techniques between sports (i.e., NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB)?

In regards to this research question, respondents were grouped by sport and then analyzed for major themes existing in all four. There were similarities with most of respondents citing media placement as a primary unit of analysis. This number included three of five NFL teams, all three NHL teams, and three of four NBA teams, two of which used third party media monitoring service. The only baseball team that participated did not cite media tracking as a source of measurement. The only two teams that used surveys and focus groups as a form of evaluation and measurement were from the NFL and NBA respectively.

Also, as one could expect, every team tracked the amount of money donated, citing the fact that it was easy to track from year-to-year and it is, in fact, required by law. One NBA team even mentioned that, "Tracking money donated to causes or charities, when it is applicable, is important and we share that information with our staff, the community, and media" (Phone interview, June 22, 2012). This response indicates a high level of openness and trust with community stakeholders. Additionally, teams from three of the four sports mentioned attendance numbers as another form of evaluation. This was explained by the fact that those numbers are also easy to track

and compare each year. Again the only respondent representing baseball did not mention event attendance as a method of evaluation. The analysis indicates there are many similarities not only among teams, but also among sports. With such a small sample we cannot make generalizations to all teams, but there is some interesting evidence to support these similarities.

There were other similarities in the responses and it was evident there were some forms of evaluation that were absent. Most notably, a consistent theme existing across all four sports was a lack of formal planning or evaluation techniques. As mentioned above, only two teams utilized formal survey research consistently in their evaluation of all programming. One participant from the NBA alluded to the lack of formal planning and evaluation and said, “A lot of what these teams do with these programs is trial and error” (Phone Interview, June 12, 2012). One other participant representing the NFL mentioned the team had very recently conducted its first formal research and that a survey was used to help measure awareness of their community programming. Results were not positive and the respondent said, “Overall there is a very low level of awareness of our efforts” (Phone interview, June 6, 2012). While there is a notable absence of these types of formal planning and measurement, it was evident from the responses that participants were aware of the impacts they are trying to achieve.

- RQ 3-b. Does the community relations programming of professional sports franchises contribute to the overall goals of each team/league?

Respondents unanimously answered yes to this question. However, there were a variety of responses as to why it is important and every team cited at least two outcomes and reasons for the benefit of community relations. In fact one team provided four responses. The answers were placed in to four categories; the most common was

that a strong presence in the community is reciprocated in the form of support for the team regardless of wins and losses. Support comes via ticket sales and attendance to events such as fundraisers for team foundations. The other three categories included: it is the responsibility of the team, creating a connection with the community, and community relations helps humanize athletes. The lone MLB participant mentioned a connection with the community and said, "We want to win championships. But our next goal is to provide a family friendly entertainment source and something the fans and community can be proud of" (Phone interview, June 18, 2012). Many respondents cited humanizing athletes including one NBA team, who explained, "It helps humanize the athletes and express a commitment to the surrounding community which invests money in the team" (Phone interview, June 22, 2012).

In addition to the categories above, several teams mentioned that their community programs also involve the business staff in the community and at events. One team respondent from the NBA said:

We've started an employee campaign known as "team up" where we partner with different nonprofits, and staff goes and helps at two events per summer to show that we are still here out in the community. Even though it's the off-season it helps get people get out of the office and makes our staff feel good (Phone interview, June 6, 2012).

Another respondent from the NHL said it serves the goals of the organization but also improves job satisfaction. "When you look at what we do behind the scenes everyone is working to get people in the building. Community involvement makes us all feel good and it makes us feel better about our jobs when we help in the community" (Phone interview, June 7, 2012).

The responses indicate community relations employees are linking the intangible outcomes of community relations to the goals of the organization. While there is little

formal evidence of goal setting, it is clear that the community programs do seek to address broad social issues. At the same time they benefit the organization in a variety of ways.

- RQ 4. What is the most important outcome of community relations programs?

Answers to this question were broad. The pervasive theme among all the answers was that respondents viewed “intangible” concepts as the most important outcome. One example provided by the respondent from MLB captured this idea. “If we can change one life or affect one person. It’s the little things, the positive things. Can they boost the image? Yes, but it’s less about tickets and more about the right thing to do” (Phone interview, June 18, 2012). Some teams did mention financial support they provide to the community as being an important outcome.

Five major categories emerged from the data representing some of the most important themes from the literature. They included: funding to support underserved populations, making the community better, being a good neighbor, relationship building, and creating an organizational culture that fans and the community can be proud of. Most respondents cited a specific program as an example of their impact on the community to reinforce their answers. One NHL team said the most important outcome was:

The funding we are able to provide to various organizations for children in need - whether it’s funding cancer research, providing school supplies or providing food for kids who would go hungry over the weekend. Many organizations rely on granting and private funding to function and continue their mission and we are able to contribute to that (Phone interview, June 15, 2012).

The two respondents who did not provide examples of specific programs explained that their track record of success in the community was part of the reason they were able to

have an impact. Both respondents mentioned their team's history of community service dating back more than 40 years. One respondent from the NBA explained, "Our team was founded in 1968, and we have a long-standing tradition when it comes to being the first major team in this state. Every year we build something that we think will have a high impact and that's what we build for and what we look to" (Phone interview, June 12, 2012). These responses support the ideas of relationship building, commitment, and satisfaction which can be found throughout the literature.

- RQ 5. Do community relations departments in professional sports franchises utilize two-way communication strategies to facilitate programming?

Almost every respondent explained that feedback from fans and the community is encouraged but not always common. Only a small number said that there were not any measures for community members to provide feedback. Five respondents mentioned they had experienced negative feedback using those communication channels. Most respondents explained that they felt fans and community members were more likely to speak up if something was wrong, rather than to provide constructive criticism or dialogic discourse. An NBA participant explained, "Often times we don't hear a lot unless they feel we have done something bad, and you get the angry email or phone call" (Phone interview, June 6, 2012).

Five categories emerged from specific examples: a large majority mentioned personal correspondence (including email and phone calls), social media, scheduled meetings with community partners [schools and nonprofits] and sponsors, informal conversations with participants, fans, and community partners [schools and nonprofits], and surveys. One NBA/NHL participant said, "Because of the popularity of social media, we get immediate feedback" (Phone interview, May 30, 2012). Another

respondent from the NHL explained how important two-way communication is and said, “We can always assume what the needs are out in the community, but if you’re not listening then you don’t really know” (Phone interview, June 7, 2012).

The small number who used surveys did not provide examples, with one NFL participant stating, “We use our survey to obtain feedback and information” (Phone interview, June 5, 2012). The teams that cited surveys indicated that surveys were a part of the evaluation process. One NBA team mentioned the use of surveys would be improved if there was better baseline information available and indicated a need for more formative research to improve programming. “We are open to more feedback and we did focus groups at one point in time. We know that our partners know best, but more research in the planning process would be helpful” (Phone interview, June 19, 2012). In all, only two respondents (one from the NFL and one from the NBA) mentioned formative research. This indicates that while teams are attempting to utilize two-way communication, there is a need for more reliable data collected during pre-program research from community stakeholders. More dialogue and symmetrical communications could enhance both program planning and outcomes.

- RQ 6. How do professional sports franchises characterize their team’s relationship with the community?

Twelve respondents explained the relationship between their team and community was positive and a few also mentioned the desire for continued improvement. “We support our community and they support us. Our fans are the heart of the team and we rely on that on the field” said one NFL respondent (Phone interview, June 17, 2012). Most teams used terms such as “great,” “fantastic,” while characterizing the relationship. One NBA team said “We are well embraced by the community and we’ve really had that

long-standing relationship. Now kids have grown up with our basketball team and we can see the impact we have” (Phone interview, June 12, 2012). Only one respondent said that the relationship was not strong and said,

Currently our team roster is fairly young and amongst them, few are well known. Individually, the athletes care about the community, but it would be fair to say that the relationship is not a strong one due to significant roster turnover and rebuilding product on the court (Phone interview, June 22, 2012).

About half of the participants also cited “ticket sales,” “fan support,” and “attendance” at community events as proof of the positive relationship. One NHL/NBA respondent said, “As the saying goes ‘everyone loves a winner.’ Our department is always important, perhaps even more so when the team scores are not positive. We are truly creating fans at a very grassroots level” (Phone interview, May 30, 2012). A few participants mentioned media coverage and constant media requests as indicators of positive relationships. Some of the responses included how much the players enjoy serving the community. These participants explained player commitment was what drives the team’s success in the community. One NFL team said, “Our relationship is very positive. Our players are always willing to support the community by making appearances or serving in positions with nonprofits” (Phone interview, June 5, 2012). Two respondents also cited players and programs that have been recognized by the league with awards or distinctions as evidence of positive relationships.

Furthermore, a large majority of respondents explained that positive relationships with the community were most noticeable and beneficial during periods of poor performance. In other words the better the relationship in the community, the better the support from the community even if the team is losing. One respondent said, “Although

we have not made the playoffs in four years, the [team] still are a prominent figure in the local community” (Phone interview, June 18, 2012).

In one instance a respondent mentioned that recent research indicated the community was largely unaware of most of the team’s community programs. As a result major changes were under way due to the low levels of community awareness.

However, she explained that the team’s relationships with community members and partners that have received benefits from the programming were good. She explained, “Our relationships with the groups that know about us are very positive. In the last four years we’ve done a little better job, and I’ve talked to people and heard some really complimentary things over what we’ve done in the past few years” (Phone interview,

June 6, 2012). A number of respondents also mentioned the importance of the relationship being mutually beneficial. One participant explained, “The community owes any franchise nothing. And for you as sports franchise, you need to come in and embrace the community and in turn get them to embrace you. They don’t owe you anything” (Phone interview, June 12, 2012).

- RQ 6-a. How do professional sports franchises measure or quantify their relationship with the community?

Once again there was unanimous agreement that quantifying relationships between the team and community was the most difficult measure in any community relations programs. One respondent argued, “It’s difficult to put exact numbers on it” (Phone interview, June 12, 2012). While another said, “I don’t know if we have an exact measurement tool” (Phone interview, June 6, 2012). Respondents also all mentioned that it is a huge challenge to produce quantifiable or measurable results from certain programs or events such as hospital visits or participation in a program.

Many respondents referred back to other evaluation techniques, such as media tracking and attendance. Five respondents did mention that those measures do not show the positive or negative impacts on the team's relationship with the community. One team from the NBA said, "We report public appearances to TMBO at the league office, however this does not quantify the positive or negative aspect of the relationship" (Phone interview, June 22, 2012). These respondents commented that these measures don't do a sufficient job providing quantifying the impact, but were "unsure" of how to quantify intangible outcomes.

There were no respondents who mentioned an effort to measure the strength or quality of their relationships. It was also evident that teams were not using any of the dimensions such as trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, commitment, communal relationships or exchange relationships as defined by Hon and Grunig (1999). However, while none of the dimensions were used to measure relationships, there were many positive responses regarding relationship evaluation. Several respondents touched on the concepts of commitment, communal relationships, and satisfaction. One respondent said, "[Our team] is committed to improving the lives of families and children. Any time we achieve that we are successful" (Phone interview, May 30, 2012). Some of the respondents felt quantifying and measuring relationships was more of an informal science. One participant from the NFL explaining, "Specifically in community relations, I'm not sure. It is based on conversations with people; it's not really that quantifiable" (Phone interview, June 7 2012).

While the teams may not be formally evaluating the constructs of quality relationships, it is clear that these relationships do exist in professional sports. There is

plenty of evidence to support strong relationships between the communities and teams. Furthermore, despite a lack of quantifiable and rigorous relationship evaluation it is easy to see that the intangible concepts discussed produce lasting moments and long-term, positive outcomes for many people in the community.

In summary the results of the in-depth interviews uncovered many themes and some interesting similarities. Numerous programs were mentioned with most teams focusing on youth in the areas of education, health, and fitness. But there was evidence of very diverse groups being served by community relations programming. Every single respondent supported the benefits of community relations and defended the contributions of community relations to the overall organization as having a significant impact. One respondent said “If you can take some time out of your life to give back or help someone out every once in a while. That is something that can really last a life time, especially with kids, if they see us out there cleaning up trash or whatever, that hopefully will stick with them and I think that influence we can have over young kids is the most important thing we can do to impact the community.”

Generally participant’s answers were positive but there was an overall consensus regarding the questions on measurement and evaluation that measuring the quality of relationships is difficult, if not “almost impossible” to do and intangible impacts are the most significant contribution from the team to the community. While teams conceded that they had difficulty measuring the quality of relationships all but one mentioned that they were well received by their community. Mechanisms for feedback and participation ranged widely. Some respondents explained they had no systems in place for feedback and no participation from the community, while others provided examples of direct

participation such as programs specifically chosen by fans and community members and detailed surveys or frequent meetings as evidence of feedback.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine measurement and evaluation techniques as they relate to community relations in the four major professional sports leagues. More specifically, the research addressed the problem of identifying specific methods of research, measurement, and evaluation in order to quantify the impact of community programs and the value it provides to each franchise. This chapter discusses the results of the in-depth interviews, their relevance to the literature and professional sports, areas for further study and future research, as well as limitations.

Discussion of Findings

This section reviews and summarizes the original research. Findings on the measurement and evaluation procedures of community relations programming, definitions of community, community relations in general, measuring relationships, community participation, two-way communications, organizational structure, and multicultural elements are discussed. The teams that participated in the qualitative study represented a diverse group of sports cities and covered nearly every geographic region in the United States however no Canadian teams from the four leagues were represented. Despite the diversity there were many commonalities among responses to the interview questions.

Measurement and Evaluation

Every respondent provided a fairly detailed response regarding measurement and evaluation. However there were very few examples of formal evaluation especially as defined in the literature, "formal measurement requires that as precisely as possible we

state how we are measuring what we observed” (Stacks, 2002, p. 128). Even more surprising was that there was really no mention of stated goals or objectives for community programs. One respondent did refer me to the team’s community development report to review the mission statement, which also contained goals and objectives. Interestingly this was the only team that was found to consistently use formal evaluation methods including surveys and focus groups. These findings contradict the literature. Lakin and Scheubel (2010) mentioned that measurement against set goals and objectives proves that community projects are actually making a difference. This study found that participants generally did not mention goals and objectives for community relations. Often times, lofty missions and taglines were used to describe programs. Interestingly, some respondents did mention a need for more formative research, which would facilitate setting goals and objectives during the strategic public relations planning process.

Another common trend among respondents was that in most instances they explained many of the things they were trying to measure are thought of as “intangible.” These concepts should be categorized as outcomes and relate to the overall goals of the program and team. Nearly all of the respondents mentioned these outcomes (intangibles) as being the most important result of the team’s community programming. Despite that fact, there were hardly any mentions or mechanisms in place to measure those outcomes. The categories that were quantifiably measured should be thought of as outputs, such as; funding participation, attendances, and media coverage, were not mentioned as being as important to the impact on the community as the intangible concepts. Spencer and Jahansoozi (2008) explained measuring and evaluating outputs

is the most basic level of analyzing the success or failure of a campaign and are used as the programs “visible results” (p. 183). While there was consistency among all teams in all four leagues in this regard, it was evident measurement in community relations programs is still failing to provide solid data on the most important impacts of that programming. Respondents did indicate local communities were, for the most part, satisfied with the team’s efforts but also many pointed out there is always a way to help more people and grow the program. However most did not present any data to support their opinions or perceptions. It was evident during the conversations that strong relationships do exist between the teams and their communities. Furthermore, there is great value placed on these relationships by both the team and the community. This indicates that while the measurement of the relationships is not formal, practitioners are working to build and enhance relationships through community relations programming.

Definitions of Community

Defining community is an important step in the community relations process. Without proper conceptualization it is hard to adequately convey how the programming benefits the team and those they serve. Respondents were very thorough in their definitions and it was evident some thought and consideration has been put into the process of defining community by every team. The respondents unanimously mentioned physical geographic boundaries as a part of their definition of community. These geographic boundaries ranged from small, localized cities to greater metro areas, then on to territories within states, then state borders and finally large multi-state regions. One respondent explained their community extends across the border into Canada and foreign military bases including trips to the Middle East while another mentioned that the team caters to a global fan base and have implemented events

around the country and world. Other than these specific examples, many teams mentioned they serve large areas, but it was evident from the responses that programming is focused primarily in the local community (city/metro area) in which the team operates. All the teams mentioned a global or national fan base as an important part of the team. However, fans were not typically included in the definition of community.

Sports teams serve two distinctive communities. The first is a geographical community with which the team interacts with on a consistent basis, most likely the city where the team plays. The other is the community of fans, who can be found anywhere in the world, who support the team. Hallahan (2004) explained defining community in terms of geography is no longer sufficient and public relations research and practice have steadily shifted toward a more cultural definition of community. This concept is important when considering the community of fans. However, it does not apply to the local community for which the team relies directly on for support. In this way geography can be the most important description of community for a professional sports team. Demographics such as race, age, gender, and ethnicity may all play a role in how teams communicate with the community and implement programs. But these descriptive characteristics do not impact who the team impacts or who might support the team. Geography often has more influence on what team a person supports as a fan, and conversely how the team chooses to interact with the community. Therefore, sports may be a unique context with which to examine community, because teams don't only serve specific groups. Rather most teams reach out broadly to anyone in the community who can benefit from community relations programming.

Community Relations

Respondents were also asked to define community relations. The definition provided for this research by Heath and Ni is “strategic implementation of objectives to create, maintain, enhance, and repair relationships with stakeholders and stakeholders whose interests can be aligned with those of the organization” (2008, ¶15). Participants all found community relations to be beneficial to their franchises. Every respondent provided examples and stories to reinforce those benefits for the community as well as the team including; the owners, executives, coaches, players, and business staff. Respondents mentioned a variety of initiatives that fit into their community platform in their definitions. All respondents consistently referred to giving back and supporting the needs of the community.

Another prevalent theme among respondents was the idea that community relations is very individual based on the needs of the local community. Every respondent was against having a set of standardized, league wide programs for every team. All respondents cited the difference between community populations as the most important factor. As explained in chapter one, all four leagues do have specific initiatives they try to tackle and those are often changing and evolving. However, the most successful programs, or at least the most popular programs amongst respondents were those that allowed for autonomy and individuality based on the current needs of the local community being served.

Reviews of team websites indicated the primary focus of community relations efforts were directed towards youth and this research confirmed that. While many programs are carried out each year, youth are certainly the primary beneficiaries. Participants mentioned youth programs during every interview and mentioned the

interactions the players have with kids as having a great impact on the community and team. This serves as an indication that while measurement is important it is evident from those connections that the programs are successful and have a lasting outcome.

Measuring Relationships

One of the primary purposes of the study was to find out if, and how, teams are measuring the impact and quality of their relationships with the communities they serve. Positive relationships are perhaps the most important indicator of successful public and community relations programs. Therefore, it is essential to understand how community relations programming impacts those relationships. Respondents had difficulty answering this question during the in-depth interviews. Most simply mentioned the same measurement tools they used to track other areas of the programming such as; attendance, money raised/donated, and news media coverage. One respondent did mention the use of surveys, but did not elaborate on what the surveys measure specifically.

Most of the participants responded that their community relations programs were well received by the community. All but one respondent characterized their relationship between the team and community with words such as “strong,” “fantastic,” and “great.” However, none of the respondents alluded to formal research or data to support their statements. Rather, most respondents provided examples of successful programs and repeat attendance as indicators of long-term relationships. Upon reviewing the transcripts the responses certainly pass the eye-test as indicators of success. There are plenty of examples that provide good insights into the importance each team places on its relationships with the community. Teams also, almost unanimously focused on concepts of quality relationships as the most important outcome of community relations

programming. It should be noted however, without formal data on those relationships, it is difficult to track progress, improve from year to year, or demonstrate the value of community relations to the team. Additionally, only one team referenced a community report. After a review of team websites, less than 50 percent of all pro teams had published reports on their community activities. While this is not an indicator of successful relationships, nor is it necessary to measure relationships, community reports do provide more detailed analysis of community programs.

Responses indicated there is typically a positive reaction from fans and community members toward community relations programming. Especially at charitable events where members of the community receive some benefit from the franchise without having to commit anything in return. This is a good example of what Hon and J. Grunig (1999) referred to as a communal relationship. This might be one way to explain the positive responses during the interviews. However, there was no evidence that any of the respondent's teams are attempting to actually measure of the strength or quality of the relationship that exists between the teams and communities. There was also no indication any of the teams had developed specific tools to measure the constructs of relationships.

Using the conceptual content analysis to analyze the interviews there were no mentions of key indicators of quality relationships such as trust, commitment, satisfaction, control mutuality, or communal and exchange relationships. While there were no questions that specifically addressed these constructs the structure of the interview did allow for elaboration on the quality of relationships and the analytics and evaluation of those relationships. Some conclusions that could possibly be drawn from

the answers provided indicate strong relationships do exist. For example the conclusion can be drawn that repeat participation year after year is a good indicator of satisfaction on the part of the community. Additionally, long-standing programs, major projects, and donations to local nonprofits show commitment from the organization to the community.

Many respondents also mentioned that a strong community presence can help with season ticket sales, thereby increasing revenue for the franchise. This indicates the presence of an exchange relationship (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). Based on the literature, this mutual benefit is an important aspect of community relations but not necessary. Also, it is clear that there is some reciprocation from the community in the form of support financially, primarily through ticket sales. Most respondents only briefly alluded to the connection between the community programs and ticket sales. Rather, they mentioned that the two might be related, where a strong presence in the community is reciprocated by a passionate fan base and strong support of the team. This outcome more closely resembles a communal relationship as described by Hon and J. Grunig (1999), which the authors argued important for any organization.

Overall with regards to measuring relationships sports teams seem to have a good grasp of the concepts that produce quality relationships. At this point though there is still a need for better evaluation including formal techniques such as surveys of community members. Implementing more formal measures will only improve what appears to be a generally successful relationship between teams and their communities.

Community Participation

A key to building strong relationships through community relations programming is including the community in the design and analysis. This topic and research question

provided interesting results. Participation fosters trust and shows commitment to the community. As a result participation can enhance relationships with community members (J. Grunig, 2001). Most respondents were aware of the benefits of community participation. In fact most respondents mentioned that more participation would be beneficial and probably enhance some programs. The literature provides examples of the benefits of participation in the planning and research phases, as well as the evaluation of community relations. Arnoff and Baskin (1983) explained community relations works effectively if there is participation from community members in the planning process. Lakin and Scheubel (2010) supported that claim and insisted on involving beneficiaries in designing and understanding the programs. The authors supported the argument by adding that participatory strategies may increase accuracy of programming assessments. Participation also helps to balance the interests of both organization and publics Grunig (2008).

During more than half of the interviews the respondents initially explained community members did not participate in the planning or evaluation phases. However, once respondents began to think about it, they were able to provide examples of community participation. Some respondents mentioned meetings with partners and sponsors during both the planning and evaluation phases. Others listed examples such as community leaders serving on boards, online requests for donations and auction requests, and kiosks set up at games to provide forums for discussion and suggestions. The most unique example provided was a form of direct participation from citizens and fans in the community. One of the NBA teams set up an online poll where fans could vote for potential nonprofits to receive grants with the winner and runner-up receiving

monetary grants for their organization. Still, four respondents answered no to this question and mentioned that decisions were made primarily based on the vision and direction that ownership felt was best.

Overall, the research did not uncover any groundbreaking results regarding participation. While many respondents did provide examples of participation it is mostly informal. This should not be overlooked however, as any community participation can help to increase trust and commitment between the community and team. Allowing the community to participate in the planning process ensures community needs are met. While including them in the evaluation phases allows teams to track and analyze the impact of programs. As it pertains to this research teams do seem to be making an effort to include the community in both phases.

Two-way Communication

Also known as symmetrical communication, two-way communication is a key component of excellent public relations and can enhance the constructs of quality relationships. Based on a review of the literature two-way communication is the most effective communication model for public relations programming. Open dialogue with community members is imperative to produce effective outcomes during community relations programming. Dialogue and feedback from community members can help prevent issues and manage crises, aid in research and evaluation, and increase trust, commitment and satisfaction. Respondents were asked about measures of feedback and dialogue and several respondents cited social media as a source of instant and constant feedback. Social media is being used by many businesses as a channel to foster participation and engage community members in community relations programming. Previous research on social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter,

indicate that the features promote more dynamic communication and more closely resembles an ideal model of two-way communication (Coombs, 2011). User-generated content allows publics to be involved in the communication process, rather than simply being fed information from the organization. The majority of respondents mentioned examples of two-way communication. Interestingly, many of the methods that respondents cited as forms of participation were also good examples of feedback and two-way communication. Respondents mentioned feedback from phone calls and emails, comment sections on team websites, meetings, and game kiosks as examples of two-way communication. Respondents also all said that informal conversations with participants, parents, doctors, teachers, and sponsors were common and serve an important part in the process as programs are planned and evaluated.

The examples provided by respondents indicate that many teams are working towards a model of two-way communication. Once again there are many informal practices being implemented but the conversations certainly provide a number of examples where two-way communication is common and effective in enhancing relationships specifically with community partners such as schools and nonprofits.

Organizational Structure

Organizational structure can have an impact on community relations programs. The literature indicates the goals of community relations should align with the goals of the team. Giving back to the community is a part of every major sports franchise. Most respondents estimated that their teams have formally had staff and departments dedicated to community relations since sometime in the 1980s. According to a review of the literature, community relations can often be confused as CSR or lumped in with cause-related marketing Maignan and Ferrell (2004).

This research found a large majority of the team's community relations departments reported to the marketing department. Most respondents said they reported to the chief marketing officer, the vice president of marketing and promotions, or the vice president of marketing. Only one team explained they reported to public relations. This NBA team mentioned that they work closely with the public relations department in order to communicate their community objectives. A few teams answered that they do not report to marketing, however, one of those teams community relations department had previously been under the marketing umbrella until as recently as one week before our interview. The same respondent also mentioned community relations had operated under the direction of several different departments and managers. In contrast one respondent explained that ownership had recently changed the corporate structure within the team. The change moved community relations under the marketing umbrella in an effort to improve perceptions of the team and boost ticket sales. The literature defines community relations as a function of public relations. Therefore the ideal corporate structure would place community relations either as its own department with complete autonomy or under the direction of public relations.

Some respondents explained their team's corporate structure was impacted by relationships with sponsors. Several respondents provided examples where corporate sponsorships certainly had an impact on the types of programs and nonprofit partners that the team could work with. These responses came from both small and large market teams and teams with histories of success and sell-outs and teams that have struggled to fill their stadiums. Some respondents also mentioned that they did not agree with their team's corporate structure. This would suggest that owners, marketing

managers, and other leaders on the business side are still focusing on exchange rather than communal relationships.

Respondents were also asked about ownership's involvement with the community relations programming. Most teams indicated high levels of interaction and commitment from owners. However the two teams that reported having a weaker relationship with the community cited ownership as a potential explanation. One mentioned a change in ownership that was still in its early stages. The other team cited a lack of commitment from the owners to embrace the local community and a team-centered focus of community relations programming.

Multicultural Elements

The literature review indicates that multicultural relations are an important component of community relations. L. Grunig (2008) advocated serving multicultural publics and found it brings a need for new methods of communication and evaluation. This research does not intend to explore the importance of content designed for minority or diverse publics or draw any conclusions about the use among teams. However, because each team and league operates in diverse communities, it is important to examine whether or not any multicultural content exists.

Serving diverse audiences is a part of any business. Sports teams operate in communities with many different ethnic groups and people of all demographics. While some teams may have more diverse populations than others, incorporating multicultural elements in community relations programming is becoming commonplace. Respondents were asked about multicultural elements because the literature explains multicultural relations can improve the construct of satisfaction in a relationship. A review of team websites found that many teams are incorporating multicultural elements

in their overall communication strategies. Examples included foreign languages, and programs directed toward specific minority groups.

Responses were mixed with about half saying they do have some multicultural elements included in their programs. Some respondents explained they adopted league initiatives such as Hispanic heritage games and Football Americano. Another team explained they celebrate Cesar Chavez day and incorporate other Latin American components into some of their school programs. Regardless of the team's geographic location (some respondents worked for teams in areas with large Hispanic populations) every respondent explained they serve diverse groups from many backgrounds and cultures. As a result most participants did say they make tweaks to programs depending on the audience. Overall the data revealed most teams were still in the early stages of incorporating any multicultural elements in their programming.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. First it is evident that measurement in community relations is neither standardized nor consistent among professional sports franchises. However, there was remarkable consistency in the answers across all four sports. At least one team in each sport mentioned news media coverage or tracking funds donated/raised were the most common form of evaluation. Participants indicated that tracking these two variables was a way to provide hard data to ownership, such as advertising equivalency, traffic on websites, and ROI. All of these measures of outputs are necessary, but do not adequately describe impacts and outcomes between the team and community. Furthermore, none of the participants provided any evidence that would suggest they are formally measuring the constructs of quality relationships. Rather, all respondents viewed the "intangibles" as something

beyond quantifiable data. The outcomes and the good they are doing in the community can be experienced at each event but not captured by data. That being said, the interviews revealed that communities are generally responding well to the community relations programs and teams as a whole. Furthermore, community relations employees are enthusiastic and committed to serving their communities. There were two instances in which the relationship was characterized as not being as strong. In both cases respondents mentioned young players without a history of community involvement and major front office changes as factors pertaining to lower levels of awareness of community programs. This might indicate the importance of player involvement as a part of enhancing relationships and could be explored further in future studies.

Second, there is an effort being made by most teams to foster dialogue and encourage two-way communication and community participation. While community participation levels varied greatly from team-to-team, some having none and others had high levels of community involvement; all of the respondents were open to receiving feedback and comments from the community through a variety of channels. Several teams mentioned a significant increase in the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook to respond to questions, post content, and communicate with the community about programming. Specific strategies varied but participants were cognizant of the importance of two-way communication and community participation. The benefits of community participation include improved evaluation metrics and enhancing both trust and satisfaction dimensions of the respective community relationships. While a more formal structure of participation would provide further benefits, it is clear that teams feel

involvement and dialogue from the community strengthens the values and commitment of the team.

Third, organizational structures and hierarchies in professional sports franchises have placed community relations under the direction of the marketing department. Most teams who participated mentioned the head of the marketing department was their direct report. Reinforcing the literature (Francis, 2007; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004) that argues community programs, especially in sports, are often thought of as cause-related marketing. Community relations programs should be mutually beneficial, rather than being used as a tool to help sell products or services. Negative perceptions of the team and lack of trust can lead to unfavorable relationships. Respondents all agreed that the goals of community relations programming should not be to sell tickets or improve the team's image. However, most of them did concede that those can be benefits of good relationships, but should not serve as motives of a team's community efforts. Several respondents disagreed with their team's organizational structure and felt the community relations department should work more closely with public relations. This indicates that these decisions are probably made on behalf of ownership and other upper-level management on the business side of teams. Community relations employees should council other department managers to align business goals and objectives, while promoting the benefits of community relations.

Fourth, community in the context of sports is defined by geographic boundaries. But there is a symbolic community of fans that the team also caters to. Respondents had detailed descriptions of the areas they served. The responses partially support using community as a theory of public relations (Hallahan, 2004; Kruckeberg & Starck,

1988). The theory posits defining communities geographically is insufficient because of new communication channels, increased connectivity, interactivity, and the importance of shared or common experiences. As mentioned these communities can be thought of as the fans around the world that support the team. However, the teams also seek to create a strong presence in their local community. They reach out to many audiences and many demographics without cornering a specific group of people. Some respondents mentioned their teams cater to a global fan base and a large community, but generally used physical explanations of the areas they served.

Community relations should foster and engage the structures of a community including the political, cultural, social, governmental, and economic systems that people are a part. There was evidence that these systems and structures are an important aspect of the programming itself. One note of importance on the team's definitions of community is that leagues do define specific "territories" or "areas" based on geography and this may contribute to each team's idea of their own community on the map. For example, Florida has three NFL teams while Colorado has one. The team in Colorado can serve the entire state while the teams in Florida are relegated to smaller, more localized areas.

Finally, teams in all four leagues serve a common goal and that was evident from the responses. Despite different locations, partners, platforms, and programs, it is clear that the community relations programs in all four sports do positively impact the community. Even without exhaustive efforts to evaluate relationships or measure impacts, there is merit and dedication on behalf of community relations employees. As the sports grow so too will the impact on the community. While it is important for

community relations department to recognize the need to move towards measuring relationships, there is plenty of evidence to support the benefits of these programs. Responses were overwhelmingly positive and numerous examples provided evidence that there is an effort to build relationships. The unique business of professional sports has allowed teams to implement highly successful programs and truly make positive impacts. Having said that, better communication, and more formal planning and analysis will only help educate the rest of the organization on the mutual benefits for the team and the people who make up their communities.

Implications for the Practice

These findings suggest there are some gaps between existing literature in public relations, community relations, and sport management and the practice amongst employees in professional sports franchises. While the findings cannot be generalized to all teams or sports, several implications do exist for professionals in community relations. It should be noted however; that many implications refer to the primary decision makers in the organization may be out of the hands of the community relations department.

First, practitioners should take more time to understand the constructs of quality relationships in order to better quantify and measure impacts and outcomes that result from community programming. Second, there are obviously challenges presented to community relations departments from major corporate sponsors and partners. These sponsors contribute to both the team and community and may have different goals or priorities in the community. In order to communicate more effectively and enhance programs, community departments should strive to set measureable goals and objectives year after year. These goals and objectives should be based on research

and data so that there is more continuity and fewer conflicts of interest within the organization. Third, while news media coverage is an important output measure, an emphasis should be made to council management and move towards tracking relationship indicators more thoroughly. Media coverage in today's sporting world is dictated by results and does not indicate favorable or unfavorable attitudes towards the team. Finally, employees of professional sports teams should seek to continually improve both participation and dialogue between the team and community. Any effort to become more open and accessible, within reason, can increase trust and satisfaction with the community. This will enhance the quality of existing relationships, and could help the team achieve business objectives.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study was a preliminary investigation into a small sample of professional sports franchise's community relations departments. While seeking to better understand how programs are being measured, there are many possibilities to enhance the literature and build a foundation for community relations and sports in academia. There is a need for more data because the industry of professional sports is only going to grow in the future. The following suggestions are made.

To expand the study community members who have participated in community programming or received benefits from the team should be recruited to participate. This would enhance the understanding of the impacts of community relations. It would also be useful to measure relationship constructs such as trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality. Analyzing the people in the community would provide a better picture of the quality of relationships and levels of community participation. An

intriguing concept to explore would be to find out if communities shared the same views as those offered by the professional teams.

A quantitative study investigating motives, measurement, attitudes, and beliefs about community relations in professional sports would increase the understanding of the programming. Including ownership, upper level executives, and managers from multiple departments in the population sample would create a better understanding of the impact community relations has on the entire organization. It would be interesting to see the difference between community relations employees and employees in other departments.

Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to examine measurement and evaluation techniques as they relate to community relations in the four major professional sports leagues. More specifically, the research addressed the problem of identifying specific methods of research, measurement, and evaluation in order to quantify the impact of community programs and the value it provides to each franchise. The study was delimited to NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB employees whose names appeared on team website directories and currently work in the community relations departments of their respective teams. Therefore, the results of this study can, in no way, be used to generalize or make inference to the entire population of professional sports teams. Nor can they be generalized to ownership, other departments within the team, or other sports teams (college, soccer, minor league teams, etc.).

Limitations

This study provides insight into community relations and provides a baseline to continue further research. However, there are numerous limitations. First, the sample

itself is small, only 13 total respondents representing 14 teams makes it impossible to generalize the findings. Recruiting was difficult and posed challenges as three of the four leagues were playing in season during the recruiting process, one of the reasons only one MLB team participated. Professional sports franchises rarely have a slow time of year and the busy schedules made it difficult to recruit.

Another limitation in this study was to include only community relations employees in the analysis. It is a fairly obvious conclusion that the managers, directors and coordinators in community relations departments are going to consider their programs with some bias. Interviewing some of the other departmental managers, owners, or general managers, may yield different results when trying to examine the role that community relations has in a professional sports franchise. However, those potential participants would have less knowledge of important information such as measurement and evaluation, partnerships, feedback, dialogue and participation.

Third, the interview itself was lengthy while it provided good insight the time frame did not fit into the schedules of many potential participants limiting the number who elected to participate. A shorter survey that specifically targeted constructs of relationships may have been more effective, provided better data, and increased the overall participation.

Lastly, the anonymity of respondents takes away some of the impacts of the findings. This research could have been completed with a quick survey and then candid, open interviews. The impact of the interviews is lower because of the lack of identifying characteristics in the examples. Utilizing a survey and then interviews would

have answered the same questions but added depth to the data. Unfortunately the condition of anonymity was included and often requested from the participants.

APPENDIX A
COPY OF IRB APPROVAL

UF Institutional Review Board
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

PO Box 112250
Gainesville, FL 32611-2250
352-392-0433 (Phone)
352-392-9234 (Fax)
irb2@ufl.edu

DATE: April 20, 2012
TO: Logan Gerber
FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD, Chair *ISF*
University of Florida
Institutional Review Board 02
SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol #2012-U-0452
TITLE: Community Relations in Sports: Measurement and Evaluation
SPONSOR: None

I am pleased to advise you that the University of Florida Institutional Review Board has recommended approval of this protocol. Based on its review, the UFIRB determined that this research presents no more than minimal risk to participants, and based on 45 CFR 46.117(c), An IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either: (1) *That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern;* or (2) *That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.*

The IRB authorizes you to administer the informed consent process as specified in the protocol. If you wish to make any changes to this protocol, **including the need to increase the number of participants authorized**, you must disclose your plans before you implement them so that the Board can assess their impact on your protocol. In addition, you must report to the Board any unexpected complications that affect your participants.

This approval is valid through April 16, 2013. If you have not completed the study by this date, please telephone our office (392-0433), and we will discuss the renewal process with you. **Additionally, should you complete the study before the expiration date, please submit the study closure report to our office.** The form can be located at http://irb.ufl.edu/irb02/Continuing_Review.html. It is important that you keep your Department Chair informed about the status of this research protocol.

ISF:dl

APPENDIX B COPY OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of this study is to examine the measurement and evaluation procedures of community relations departments in professional sports franchises.

What you will be asked to do in the study:

You will be asked approximately 25 open ended questions in an interview style format about community relations programming, how you define community, output and outcome evaluations, motives, sources of funding, support, staff size, and measuring relationships. The interview will take place at your convenience via Skype or Telephone and your answers will be recorded and later transcribed by the principle investigator.

Time required:

45 minutes

Approved by
University of Florida
Institutional Review Board 02
Protocol # 2012-U-0452
For Use Through 04-16-2013

Risks and Benefits:

There are no known risks or benefits associated with your participation in this study.

Compensation:

You will not receive any compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Lists with participant's names will be located on a secure file in my personal computer and this list will be deleted once the study has concluded.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:

Logan Gerber, graduate student department of public relations,
; phone

Juan-Carlos Molleda, PhD, College Journalism and Communications, Weimer Hall,
; phone

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

IRB02 Office, Box , University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; phone

Agreement:

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Instructions: Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. Social responsibility is defined as the obligation your team has to benefit society.

Interview Questions:

1. How does your franchise define community and community relations?
2. What programs are considered to be a part of your team's community relations department?
3. How would you characterize the relationship between your team and your community? How do you quantify or measure that relationship?
4. How do you feel that your local community responds to your team's community programming?
5. Do you think community relations is beneficial to a professional sports franchise? Why or why not?
6. Do you believe your team's community relations program sufficiently meets community relations and social responsibility needs set forth by the standards of your league and your ownership? Why or why not?
7. Do you think community relations should be standardized in your league? Why or why not? What about across all sports? Why or why not?
8. How do you measure the success or failure of your teams' community relations programs? Please provide specific details.
9. Are there any measures in your community relations programs that allow for feedback and dialogue from the community?
10. Have you made any changes to the community relations programming in the past 12, 18, 24 months? Were these changes made because of evaluation or community feedback?
11. Who do you report to on the outcomes of community relations programming?
12. Do you feel ownership is supportive of current community relations programs? Why or why not?
13. Does your community relations program have any multicultural elements, for example foreign languages, specific minority programs etc.?

14. Do community members participate in the design, or planning process of community relations programming? Why or why not? If so, how?
15. Why was your community relations program established? How long has it existed? How much money is budgeted for your community relations programming and where does funding come from?
16. Do you believe community relations is important to the overall success of your team? Why or why not?
17. What do you consider to be the most important result of community relations programming? Why?
18. Does your team use social media to communicate community programs?
19. Does your community relations program partner with other organizations, companies, non-profits?
20. What is your current position in the community relations department?
21. How large is the community relations staff for your team?
22. How long have you worked for your team? In your current position? In community relations?
23. What is your highest level of education completed? (High School, bachelor's, master's, PhD., Law)

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Logan Gerber was born in Gunnison, Colorado and moved to Steamboat Springs, Colorado at the age of six. He grew up with a love for sports and began skiing at age three and ski jumping at age seven. He was a member of the United States Ski Team from 1998 until 2003 and competed internationally until 2006. He tried out for the U.S. Olympic team in twice, in 2002 and 2006. In 2002 he graduated from the Lowell Whiteman School in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Following the 2006 season, he decided to attend college at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. An interest in writing and a lack of math skills led him to major in journalism and ultimately into the field of public relations. He graduated in 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts in journalism and technical communication and a minor in business.

Following graduation, Logan was accepted to a Master of Arts in Mass Communication program in the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida in Gainesville. During his time in Gainesville he focused his research on relationship management and social media, crisis communication, and corporate social responsibility. He also held an internship with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers as the community communications coordinator. This broadened his understanding and interest in a career in professional sports, and motivated him to pursue a thesis in the field. In August 2012, Logan was awarded Master of Arts of Mass Communication with an emphasis in public relations.