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Baseball Players, Organizational Communication, and Cultural Diversity

Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Minor-League Clubhouses

WILLIAM HARRIS RESSLER

As baseball attracts players from more and more cultures, players are called on to function in an increasingly diverse environment. Scholars of baseball and culture have been following these changes from various perspectives. Several presentations at the Nineteenth Annual NINE Spring Training Conference on the Historical and Sociological Impact of Baseball, for example, looked at the roles of owners, media, league officials, and governments in promoting or stifling diversity in baseball.¹ One presentation, however, alluded to players' approaches to diversity: Ila Borders described how her on-field performance improved following her move to a culturally diverse minor-league team. She attributed much of her improvement to the communication among team members, which she characterized as supporting and embracing cultural differences.²

Her story was thought-provoking and leads to a number of questions. What aspects of being in a multicultural context influence communications among team members? What significance does cultural identification hold for professional baseball players? In what ways might culture affect performance? In an initial effort to address questions such as these, prior interviews with culturally identified minor-league players were analyzed and results were interpreted with reference to relevant and instructive approaches from the field of organizational communication.

METHODS

To explore what culture means to players, thirty-seven minor-league players were interviewed during the 2011 season. Of the thirty-seven players interviewed, six were playing Class AAA ball, eleven were playing Class AA ball, an additional player was interviewed twice—at both the AA and AAA levels—

and nineteen were playing Class A Short Season ball. They included seventeen Jewish players, fifteen African American players, and three Spanish-speaking players born in the United States—two additional players, native speakers of neither Spanish nor English, were born outside the United States.

The predominance of Jewish and African American interviewees reflects the original goals of the study: to understand the phenomenological meanings of cultural identification in baseball among members of two minorities, one visible (African American), one not (Jewish). During the course of the interviews, and in light of Ila Borders's story, players' comments suggested a different research question: How do players react to cultural diversity within their teams? To help address this question, data from interviews with an additional thirty Spanish-speaking minor-league players were also included in the analysis. These latter interviews were conducted in Spanish during the 2009 and 2010 seasons as part of a separate study.³

Semistructured interviews were conducted with players individually, with the exception of three two-player interviews and one three-player interview that included two players who had previously been interviewed separately. Indeed, four of the thirty-seven players were interviewed on two separate occasions. All players were at least eighteen years old, and all were informed that (a) the researcher was affiliated with a college and not with any team or league, (b) participation was voluntary, and (c) no information would be shared that could identify a particular player or team. The inferred trustworthiness of responses is also based on observations that players were accessible and generous with their time and expressed interest in the research; many actually thanked the researcher for addressing the topic of culture in minor-league baseball. Many players requested contact information to obtain a copy of the results or additional information related to cultural identification. In addition, it was possible to observe a number of the players' interactions with other culturally-diverse teammates, and thus to validate their statements.

Players gave their consent to have the interviews audio recorded. All interviews were transcribed and players' comments about cultural groups were coded. After a series of meetings and exchanges of memos, the researcher and three graduate research assistants grouped players' statements into emergent categories, including:

- representations of culture;
- forms of cultural identification, past and present;
- meanings and salience of cultural identification;
- within-group relations; and
- approaches to cultural diversity.

The analysis focused on players' comments specifically regarding approaches to cultural diversity. The main theme that emerged captured players' natural and genuine interest in cultures and cultural diversity, along with the discretionary, inconspicuous, informal nature of their actions to embrace diversity. Six additional themes included players' reasons for this interest.

RESULTS: PLAYERS EMBRACE DIVERSITY EVEN WHEN MANAGEMENT DOES NOT

In organizations, any given internal communication or inwardly directed action, including approaches to diversity, can be formal, top-down, and driven by management, or informal, bottom-up, and initiated by individuals.⁴ The latter is captured in the concept of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB): discretionary actions taken by an organization's individual members, at their own initiative, that are not formally rewarded by management, that involve interpersonal communication and specifically interpersonal helping, and that promote both the internal functioning and external image of the organization.⁵

A complementary concept, self-perception theory recognizes that being rewarded for performing a task or disciplined for not performing it reduces internal motivation to perform that task. Top-down, formal requirements to perform a task make the task less likely to be performed when the reward or threat is no longer present.⁶ Seeing their actions as voluntary, without formal demands or rewards, reinforces individuals' self-perceptions and sustains helping behaviors, because it focuses individuals' attention on their personal reasons for helping. For example, one of the players explained why he enjoys visiting children's hospitals throughout the season on his own, outside the framework of team-mandated community service, and without receiving credit: "The honest truth—do you want me to go deep down inside?—baseball's a selfish game. . . . Minor-league baseball is spent mainly as the most selfish game you could ever play. . . . It's such a selfish, cut-throat thing, that I feel like, maybe subconsciously, I need a balance. . . . [Visiting sick children spontaneously] is just stuff that really makes you feel good about yourself."

Consistent with the concepts of OCB and self-perception theory, players tended to say that helping each other, across cultural lines, was perhaps encouraged but generally not mandated by their organizations. As a result, players took the initiative in helping other culturally-diverse players and saw their actions as internally motivated. For example, after describing the process of helping different groups of players on the team, one of the players was asked who initiates those contacts. He explained, "I think it's something that's dealt

with among [players in] the locker room between ourselves—communicating and stuff.” Another player echoed this idea, explicitly downplaying the role of team officials: “The players take it on themselves to introduce themselves to a new guy and try to communicate with them as much as they can. . . . I don’t think it has anything to do with the staff.” A third explicitly reflected the idea of self-perception theory—and OCB—that without strong external influences, individuals are more likely to internalize a sense of personal responsibility to initiate prosocial, internal, cross-cultural communications: “As players we should take it on ourselves to get to know the guys.”

Asked directly if the organization encourages him or other players to interact with the team’s Spanish-speaking players, for example, a player replied, “That was my personal goal—the day that I signed . . . and I am still living it every single day.”

Many of the Spanish-speaking players said they actually did not expect to receive a great deal of assistance from team officials—and many did not. As one Spanish-speaking interviewee noted, “It is not like the team is obligated to help you.”

None of this is meant to suggest that organizations and individual minor-league teams do not use policy or programming to promote cross-cultural communication. Players acknowledged that they do. One of the players even admitted he was not always enthusiastic about interacting with the multitude of cultural groups and languages spoken on his team; he also conceded that he was initially skeptical about his organization’s efforts to force different cultural groups into close contact. At the same time, however, he described his personal efforts and successes—and the satisfaction he felt—interacting socially with members of different cultural groups. He made the point that, while the team created an initial opportunity, successful internal communication across cultures was up to the players themselves.

Furthermore, the preceding analysis is not meant to imply that all interactions are cross-cultural or that players eschew social interactions driven by common cultural identification. The same player acknowledged, for example, that even when he would go out to eat with one member of another culture, the other members of that cultural group would invariably all come along as well. Players’ initiatives are meant to bridge but not to erase the boundaries between groups. Their reactions to diversity were a recognition, not a negation, of social categories.

When players’ communication activities surrounding cultural diversity were internally motivated, what did those motivations include? Players’ explanations can be categorized into six separate but related reasons for their choosing to help their culturally diverse teammates.

SIX REASONS

Players Embrace Diversity Because Cultures Matter

Players expressed an appreciation for cultural diversity on their teams, because culture is meaningful to most of them. Many players, however, initially said that culture does not matter, that they all play the same game, on the same team, with the same goals. Nevertheless, their further statements—and at times their actions—showed that culture really is important to them. In one representative example, an African American player began to explain why culture is irrelevant: “When you get on the field, baseball is baseball. No matter where you’re from. You still play it the same—” In the middle of that sentence, an African American player from the visiting team called to the interviewee by name, who responded, using the opposing player’s nickname. Returning to the interview, the interviewee continued the sentence exactly where he left off, “—base paths ninety feet, the mound is the same—sixty-foot-six—still got the fence, still got a guy throwing the ball, and people got to make plays.” At the end of the interview, with the microphone off, he was asked how he knew the player from the visiting team. He replied matter-of-factly that there are not many African American baseball players, so when they see each other, they notice. He made it clear that this is something that he does regularly and that other players do as well: African American minor leaguers notice each other, form friendships, and follow each others’ progress. In other words, culture does not matter—except when it does.

Most of the culturally identified players responded similarly, as if they felt that they *ought* to say that cultural identification *should* be irrelevant. Thus, many players first asserted that culture was no longer significant or noticeable, then gave examples of noticing and even actively looking for other members of their own culture, making efforts to meet them, helping them when possible, following their careers, and rooting for them to succeed. Almost all said that being baseball players who belong to a particular culture made them feel special.

Culture, however, included much more than race, religion, or language. For example, meaningful cultural identification was frequently geographical—not just being from a particular country, but being from a given region, city, or even neighborhood. Age and tenure in organized baseball formed bases for meaningful group membership and identification. So did draft order, as reported by one player who said he befriends, follows, and identifies with other players who were selected in the latter rounds of the amateur draft. Culture also included physical condition, such as being a member of deaf culture or having a noticeable skin condition, both of which were cited as having cre-

ated bonds of identification with others with the same condition. Culture, then, was defined to include any meaningful social category membership.⁷ In turn, meaningful social identity was often defined by whatever a player felt made him different.⁸ As one player observed, “Everything is culturally related.”

This juxtaposition of ignoring culture while at the same time noticing different aspects of culture and using them as a basis for socially meaningful identification was summed up by one of the players. “I don’t think people are saying, ‘Hey, this is what I am, listen to my story,’ but if you look, you can see it. . . . Music, dress, food choices, . . . where people are, what they like, what they do, who they hang out with, who they speak to, what language they speak in, what religion they are, what they’re wearing, what they’re doing before games.” Culture is pervasive in the clubhouse, and players acknowledged its significance in their daily lives. This, in turn, led players who felt different to empathize with players from other cultures who also felt different.

Players Embrace Diversity Because They Feel Empathy

Daniel Batson has presented extensive empirical evidence supporting the important mediating role of empathy in helping others.⁹ It is not surprising, therefore, that taking the initiative to help others across cultural boundaries could potentially be moderated by empathy. Indeed, players’ comments suggested that some embrace diversity out of feelings of empathy for members of other minority cultures. Asked where these feelings of empathy come from, players’ answers reflected a diversity of sources: parents, culturally diverse youth baseball teams, or playing in Spanish-speaking countries in the off-season. Even American-born, Spanish-speaking players noted that playing in South and Central America fostered a greater empathy for diversity.

In addition, some players suggested that identifying as a member of a minority culture was a source of the empathy they felt toward players from other minority cultures. One of the Spanish-speaking players, referring to an African American teammate who makes more effort to learn Spanish than other players on his team (a pattern repeated on other teams as well), said, “Maybe he understands both minorities, I guess.”

One player, when asked what he would want to know about players from other cultures if *he* were conducting this research, replied, “I guess I’d just want to know, really, do they feel somewhat left out or kind of set aside. I feel like that at times, being the only African American. I feel like—that I’m left out sometimes from some things . . . you know?” He explained that he was not implying racism or intentional exclusion from activities, but that the other players simply had other culturally driven values and interests and that he was

unable to find anyone else on the team who enjoyed spending free time the way he did—because of his cultural uniqueness on the team. A second player, after the recorder was turned off, admitted that he has tried to help members of other cultures because he has known what it is like, in his words, “to be a stranger.”

A third player noted, in reference to teammates from other minority cultures, “They interact with everyone else but for the most part they stick with each other, and me being on the outside and seeing that, I immediately want to cling to them, because I know that all they want is for someone to go that extra mile just to know them even more.”

A fourth player directly connected empathy with OCB. He noted that players understand the challenges teammates face and choose to help, without prodding or rewards from management, and without recognition for their good deeds: “We do more than what people think. I mean, a lot of people don’t understand how extremely tough it is to come to a completely different country and be involved with people who don’t speak the same language and try and be successful.”

Thus, players who felt like outsiders expressed a certain empathy for other players whose distinctiveness could have led to their exclusion. None of this is to suggest that players’ communication activities surrounding cultural diversity were motivated entirely by altruism, however. Indeed, these same players recognized the inherent self-interest in selflessness.

Players Embrace Diversity to Affiliate and to Achieve

The concept of group cohesion is expressed through sharing common goals, taking collective responsibility for outcomes, valuing group membership, using “we” more than “I” in discussing their roles, and building a culture of teamwork and mutual support.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, because these are many of the defining components of OCB, members of more cohesive work teams tend to be more likely to adopt a pattern of OCB.¹¹ Group cohesion can take the form of social or task cohesion, and both types of cohesion can work together to help build successful sports teams.¹² More generally, this is also true for any work team.¹³ At the same time, stronger group cohesion has been shown to reinforce group members’ social (cultural) identities.¹⁴ In other words, when team members identify with each other more strongly, it becomes easier to express and to accept cultural differences.

Players are therefore not disinterested parties when they take initiatives to help each other. Rather, when players approach diversity, they appear to recognize the opportunities for improved social affiliation and professional

achievement that embracing diversity offers. The difference between this set of rewards and externally (organizationally) generated rewards is that internally generated rewards are potentially more long-lasting, more meaningful, and more likely to sustain prosocial behavior.

One internal motivation comes from the anticipated satisfaction derived through improved social interaction, consistent with the concept of social cohesion. Players indicated that, given the need to spend so much time together, on and off the field, improved social ties have intrinsic value.

Another internal motivation comes from the anticipated benefit to a player's professional achievement, consistent with the concept of task cohesion. Players' beliefs that cultural diversity can affect their professional achievements appear to be an expression of what organizational communication refers to as "Value In Diversity."¹⁵ The basic tenet underlying this concept is that diversity among organization members can result in more varied ideas, perspectives, knowledge, and skills becoming available for accomplishing work-related goals more effectively.¹⁶

Thus, a number of players implied that their desire to affiliate with teammates across cultural boundaries was driven by their motivation to succeed professionally. A player remarked in this context, "They learn from us and we learn from them." Players from Spanish-speaking countries noted specifically that they learn English as they share baseball skills with English speakers.

Consequently, a player explained that he advised his brother to reach out to Spanish-speaking peers, partly for the potential professional profit: "He is down in rookie ball right now, and there's a lot of Latins down there, and I told him, 'You have to get to know those guys because those are the guys that are going to help you more than anyone else out there.'"

Another player noted that taking the initiative to affiliate across cultures builds trust, and that "once you have that trust, guys are going to play better. Not just playing—people operate better when they're around people they trust. . . . I feel more comfortable playing with that guy because I trust him." The player went on to give specific examples of cross-cultural communication leading to trust and yielding better performance on the field. Not surprisingly, OCB has been shown in other settings to be a function of trust.¹⁷

Benefits can even extend beyond baseball. One player, who spoke neither Spanish nor English before entering professional baseball, talked about his options once his playing days ended. He connected the multicultural experiences he has embraced as a player to his future success as a business owner. "I can speak English now, and I can speak Spanish now, so it's two languages that I picked up while I was here doing baseball, and it's going to help me going up."

Internally generated motivations for embracing cross-cultural interactions can thus reflect enlightened self-interest and the anticipation of benefit. Players' prosocial behaviors, however, can also be motivated by an inherent interest in culture and cultural diversity.

Players Embrace Diversity Because They Enjoy Different Cultures

The concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) has been developed in an effort to capture the tendency for some individuals to have a greater interest in and facility with cultural diversity. It includes four elements: drive, strategy, knowledge, and action.¹⁸ Of the four, CQ-Drive—wanting to experience other cultures—offers the most insight into players' reasons for their communication activities across diverse cultural backgrounds.

CQ-Drive represents not only individuals' interest in experiencing other cultures but also the extent to which they think they are capable of interacting effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, their confidence in being able to navigate culturally diverse environments. It includes the anticipation of both types of internally generated rewards discussed above: the personal enjoyment and sense of satisfaction that come from interacting with others from diverse cultures as well as the instrumental benefits that those different cultures offer.

CQ-Drive can be seen in players' comments, such as a player who said simply, "I love their culture," or another player who said, "When I go to a different culture, I want to be part of their culture as well." It was reflected in expressions of personal gratification, such as when a Jewish player said, "It's fun interacting with different cultures," and when another Jewish player noted, "You get to know different people. You get to learn a different culture." Their interest was reciprocated: African American and Spanish-speaking players occasionally asked their Jewish teammates detailed questions about being Jewish, such as what "kosher" means. Players from Spanish-speaking countries further expressed the desire to learn about English-speaking cultures, especially through the personal, cross-cultural interactions that being in the United States affords them: "They learn from you and you learn from them, how to treat a person . . . in a different way, whether it be because of race or anything else."

A connection between CQ and OCB was actually made by players. One player recalled, "It has been a great experience getting to meet many players from all around and getting to know them real well and just being able to help whoever I can." Another player, when asked what he would study if *he*

were conducting this research (most of the players were asked this question), replied, "I would ask, do you feel that having people with ability from many different cultures is a positive or a negative for the game? . . . I think it's a positive, because baseball is worldwide. . . . I think it adds something that you have to have. You have to have people from many different cultures to make the game great." This was not only a reflection of the perceived instrumental benefits of cultural diversity, it was an acknowledgement of an additional motivation for players' taking the initiative in embracing cultural diversity: their love of the game itself and their belief that cultural diversity benefits the game of baseball.

Players Embrace Diversity Because They Love Baseball

It is not surprising that players' love of the game would be related to their tendency toward OCB. After all, organizational identification and commitment are related to OCB.¹⁹

To the players interviewed, embracing culture helps to promote the game. While organizations should play a role, they felt ultimately the responsibility rests with players, especially if players feel organized baseball is not doing enough to promote the game to culturally diverse audiences. In the words of one player, "Basketball does a great job of promoting its players and promoting the game to different cultures, and I think baseball could do a better job of that. . . . I feel like it's my responsibility, you know? . . . That's how the game grows. I feel like it's handed down from one generation to the next, and I feel like it's your responsibility. I enjoy it, but at the same time, I feel like it's something I *should* do [player's emphasis]."

This quote is typical of comments made by many players. Culturally identified players appear to perceive, within their fidelity to their cultures, an opportunity to pass along their love of baseball and to help sustain and even bolster the popularity of the game. Thus, one player pointed out that culture, overall, is a way to increase fan identification with the players and therefore with baseball: "Most people will be like, 'How can I relate to that guy? He's a baseball player,' but if you have the middle ground of being Jewish, or Black, or Asian, I feel that helps. . . . It is kind of like an icebreaker, . . . it makes you more approachable."

One player said that sharing a common cultural identity with fans not only draws fans to him, it ultimately draws him closer to fans: "I'm not gonna lie . . . whenever I see a young black kid, I always make sure I try to toss him a ball or sign an autograph or just go shake his hand or something, because I feel like it helps them to identify with you and identify with baseball, and

hopefully they'll want to come out again." Despite the seeming particularism of this quote, he—and other players—repeatedly said that *all* cultures offer a bridge to greater fan engagement, that cultural diversity benefits the sport as a whole, and this realization enhances players' appreciation of diversity. Their desire to give back to a new generation, moreover, reflects appreciation not only for the game, but also for the communities the players came from.

Players Embrace Diversity Because Communities Matter

African American, Jewish, and Spanish-speaking players discussed various needs within their own communities and pointed out the benefits that playing baseball offers to young members of their respective communities, benefits that they believed they, as culturally identified baseball players, could bring back to their communities. One African American player said, "It's just something that motivates me . . . just because I want to and I love giving back and can help change a kid's life or make him feel like, 'Hey, I can do anything I want.' It's just a very great feeling to have that effect on young people, . . . especially African American kids."

African American, Jewish, and Spanish-speaking players asserted that they can be especially influential when interacting with members of their own communities. One player's representative comments captured this: "When I do have the opportunity, I jump at it, because I know that, coming from an African American background, if you hear it from somebody that looks like you, it's a little bit easier to relate to what's coming out of that person's mouth."

The latter quote also contains a clue for understanding players' voluntary choices to embrace culture and cultural diversity. Understanding the importance of community within their own cultures also makes players more understanding of the importance of community to *all* cultures. It thus represents an additional source of players' appreciation for cultural diversity, one that finds expression in the voluntary acts that players perform. It brings the results back to Ila Borders's reflections on her own experiences. Perhaps her teammates were better at embracing cultural diversity, and therefore at accepting her, because they understood the contribution of cultural identification to effective communication, based on their experiences connecting to their own communities. If anything, having a strong connection to one's own community actually facilitates cross-cultural communication. This was noted by individual Spanish-speaking players and has support in psychological concepts of in-group identification, going back to Kurt Lewin's work on core versus marginal identification.²⁰

DISCUSSION: WHAT ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CAN LEARN
FROM BASEBALL PLAYERS; WHAT ORGANIZED BASEBALL CAN LEARN
FROM ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

What began as a study of baseball players' own cultural identifications ended up as an exploration of players' reactions to each others' cultural identifications. This was because of a realization that appreciation for diversity and accompanying communication activities originate in the voluntary decisions of players themselves. This, in turn, suggests a number of lessons that can benefit both organized baseball and organizational communication practitioners. The relationship between OCB and culture, especially diversity, is still being studied; minor-league baseball can offer fertile ground for exploring possible connections.

Opportunities, Not Demands

One of the lessons for baseball and other organizations seems to be that organizations are well served when they offer their members opportunities to embrace diversity. Results of the current study suggest that the emphasis should be on opportunities. Meaningful approaches to diversity seem to come from individual choice, flowing organically from the bottom up, not from organizational policy, dictated from the top down. To use a baseball analogy, Branch Rickey could communicate the value of diversity by hiring Jackie Robinson, but it was up to players like Pee Wee Reese to take advantage of the opportunity and embrace diversity. Bill Veeck could move spring training to Arizona so Larry Doby could stay in the same hotel with the rest of team, but after that the players were on their own, in the hotel and in the clubhouse.

One opportunity involves starting early in players' careers.²¹ Lower organizational levels tend to involve higher task interdependence, which has possible links to OCB.²² Moreover, some of the concomitant aspects of being at a lower organizational level, such as having limited resources, can lead to higher OCB, as well.²³ One player noted, in this context, "From talking to people, I have heard that as you get higher up and closer to the majors, when it becomes more real that it is so close, within reach, I think that it is a little more competitive. I feel at this point [Class A Short Season] we are far away from there, so it's slightly more team-oriented."

How, then, should players be given the opportunities to embrace diversity, especially at these lower organizational levels? Their comments during the interviews (and self-perception theory) suggest that, left on their own, players can initiate multiculturally inclusive communication activities. Giving players

a certain latitude in creating roles within the organization rather than having formally defined expectations can go a long way toward creating these opportunities.

Roles, Not Rules

CQ is related to the ability to negotiate culture and conflict.²⁴ Thus players with higher CQ should be more likely to initiate prosocial internal communications—to adopt an OCB orientation. One player said, “I like to be kind of in the middle and try to help out a little bit if problems come up. Like if Spanish people have problems with the American guys or the other way around, I try to [explain], ‘you got to understand . . . that’s how these guys are’ . . . because I am not really American, I am not really Spanish. But I am speaking English and a little bit of Spanish. So, yeah, it kind of helps to be in the middle sometimes.”

Flexible, informal organizational styles can facilitate OCB.²⁵ Perhaps, then, simply letting players take leadership roles in internal communications allows those with higher CQ to engage in cross-cultural OCB. CQ approaches, however, suggest that individuals are more likely to initiate those activities if they are given the confidence that their efforts will succeed. This is one area in which top-down approaches can bear fruit.

Cultural Satisfaction, Not Awareness Training

Asked what organizations could do to promote cultural diversity, players offered ideas that went beyond hackneyed cultural sensitivity workshops or diversity training seminars. A player suggested that celebrations of heritage nights could be used to showcase culture—not to attract more fans, but to let the players on the diamond know that culture is valued by the organization. He said, “They could do different cultures on different nights. So you can make everybody on the field feel like they are part of it, and everybody in the world is part of this game, regardless of what country, what race you are, and what background you come from.” Other players also expressed an appreciation for heritage nights, while admitting that they derived the greatest pleasure from events that celebrated their own culture. Studies have shown that an increase in perceived support for members’ culture by their organization seems to increase the probability of members’ adopting an OCB orientation.²⁶

Similarly, opportunities for fostering CQ also include a range of non-work experiences.²⁷ These can include community service, for example, which has been shown to bolster minor leaguers’ positive perceptions of culture and comfort with cultural diversity.²⁸

So, too, community service and other socially responsible communication activities can be related to OCB. Athletes derive personal satisfaction from helping others; they also report stronger feelings of attachment to their team when the team is involved in socially responsible acts, such as promoting or raising money for a prosocial cause.²⁹ These outcomes are related to the clear, immediate, positive feedback that can accompany these activities, and that feedback can come from the organization. This can help raise individuals' feelings of self-worth, which is in turn related to the tendency to initiate OCB.³⁰ Thus organizational expressions of appreciation, while avoiding the use of incentives, can encourage players' spontaneous acts of embracing cultural diversity.

Selfish Interests, Selfless Acts

Doing good can come from the anticipation of feeling good, but players can also perform selfless acts while motivated by more tangible forms of personal self-interest. One player, for example, described why he helps members of all groups: "One thing that my father always told me is that you never know who you are going to need. So it doesn't matter who you come across, you know, white, black, tall, skinny, it doesn't matter. You may need them one day."

Rather than appealing to self-sacrifice, then, encouraging players' enlightened self-interest may be a more effective way to stimulate OCB. Organizations can frame diversity as being in individuals' interests; this approach can offer greater potential for success in encouraging OCB by its being consistent with players' nascent perceptions. One of those seemingly selfish interests can be acquiring better skills; greater cultural diversity can mean greater access to diverse and innovative approaches to playing the game.

More Cultures, More Innovation

As noted above, players can perceive professional benefit when linking OCB with diversity. One player said, "It's fun learning how to communicate with them, but it's also—hey, this isn't just the American game now, this is the Latin game as well." Another said, "In the process of me doing that for them, they've taught me so much about the game."

These comments—and others, some of which were quoted above—suggest that increased diversity leads not only to increased knowledge (of language, customs, or style of play), but also to increased appreciation for the value of diversity as a resource offering innovative professional and communication skills.³¹ In turn, comments like these and others quoted above suggest that

players might see the game as moving toward a tipping point, in which so many cultures interact that the concepts of majority and minority are rendered increasingly less meaningful.³²

Is Multicultural the New Majority?

One lesson from minor-league baseball seems to be that, as the number of culturally diverse players continues to grow, the divide between majority and minority cultures becomes increasingly blurred. One player commented, "The world grew together so much, everybody has to live together. And the clubhouses are the same way. Everybody in the world plays baseball. You have Asian people, you have Latin American people, European people nowadays, American people. . . . And if you just build groups and just separate yourselves from the other cultural groups then that is not going to work out in the end."

Comments such as this—and others—seem to suggest that because so many different groups play baseball, the mosaic of cultural minorities together constitute the majority—or soon will. As cultural diversity becomes the new majority, then, professional success could become intertwined with a player's motivation and ability to navigate a multicultural environment. If so, then perhaps an individual player's approaches to culture could factor into estimations of the overall value of that player to the organization.

Is Culture the New "Moneyball"?

In *Moneyball*, Michael Lewis described an approach through which advanced statistical analysis of player performance is used to identify previously undervalued players.³³ As cultural diversity is rapidly becoming the norm, communication skills might serve as an additional means for determining player value and identifying undervalued players. Perhaps CQ and a predisposition to engage in OCB can be used to identify undervalued players with the potential to contribute to team success in a growing multicultural environment. The essence of this idea was originally suggested by the culturally identified broadcaster of one of the Class A Short Season teams, who, although he did not specifically address OCB or CQ, referred to "that next inefficiency. *Moneyball*, Oakland, the whole thing. That's the inefficiency, how many guys are going by the wayside because they just didn't have the resources to deal with certain things." Those "things" can include the challenges of cultural diversity, and those valued resources can include the ability and motivation of players to take the initiative in addressing those challenges.

Some organizations, such as IBM, Lloyd's, Novartis, and Nike, have used CQ

in some form as a criterion for hiring. CQ has been related to working smarter and learning faster while also being more patient—for example, being able to delay gratification in receiving workplace rewards—skills demanded of baseball players working their way up through the minor leagues.³⁴ Moreover, research has suggested that CQ-Drive is correlated with successfully identifying with a multicultural group, such as a culturally diverse baseball team.³⁵ High CQ of individual team members, then, might relate to increased team cohesion and even enhanced team performance, and could add to a player's value to the team.

OCB has also been suggested as a possible criterion for selection, retention, and promotion within an organization.³⁶ OCB has been shown to improve organizational productivity and efficiency.³⁷ While feelings of collective group potency (such as winning) have been shown to increase the tendency toward adopting an OCB orientation, OCB could conceivably enhance feelings of group efficacy, which in turn can increase the probability of success, on a baseball team or any work team.³⁸ In that case, a tendency toward OCB could be used in baseball as a criterion for evaluating potential team members.

Attention is often directed to what organized baseball has or has not done sufficiently in addressing and promoting cultural diversity. Typically, however, the conversation ignores players' contributions, perhaps because their actions tend to be private and informal. Nonetheless, minor-league baseball players appear to initiate meaningful, cross-cultural communication in ways that embrace cultural diversity, and organized baseball can benefit from these self-motivated choices to span cultural boundaries, when teams:

1. recruit and promote individuals who have the motivation to initiate and sustain cross-cultural communication;
2. nurture those motivations by demonstrating that cultural diversity is valued, using carefully planned external and internal communications that celebrate cultures; and then
3. give those individuals latitude to explore culture in their own personally meaningful ways, taking care to avoid imposing external, organizational incentives that undermine internal, individual motivations to embrace diversity.

Players' comments indicated that the point is being reached where management can focus on encouraging and trusting individual players' initiatives, by actively listening to the players' reasons for embracing cultural diversity. It would therefore be worth testing players' beliefs that were expressed in the interviews. Future research could examine, for example, to what extent and in what ways events such as heritage nights affect players' perceptions of cultures

and their perceptions of how their organizations value cultures. Studies could evaluate how different ways of planning and promoting those events have an effect on players. It would be instructive, as well, to analyze the roles cultural diversity plays in community relations, or the extent to which culture-specific community service influences players' reactions to culture and cultural differences; both planning and evaluating these activities could incorporate an experimental approach, to try to understand what aspects of the activities have the greatest influence on the players. Observation and interviews can help provide more detail regarding ways in which socially responsible communication activities can impart greater appreciation for culture and increase players' motivation to explore diverse cultures.

Interactions among OCB, CQ, communication, and cultural diversity warrant further study.³⁹ Minor-league baseball offers a promising environment for studying those interrelations. Studying the effects of these interconnected variables among baseball players represents a potential contribution to the growing understanding of cultural diversity and communication. The outcomes can have implications not only for baseball teams but for any organization with a multicultural, team-based workforce and an interest in understanding what motivates its members to build working relationships that cross cultural boundaries.

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