Focus

Who's the Man?
Sammy Sosa, Latinos, and Televisual Redefinitions of the "American" Pastime

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Latino and Latin American baseball players have expanded the boundaries of the "American pastime," asserting their ethnic and national identities even while being accepted as representatives of the sport most closely aligned with a white United States identity. This redefinition is achieved in part via cable and satellite technologies that carry images of Latinos to homes throughout the United States at a time when the Latino population is growing and becoming more dispersed, raising the possibility that baseball will lessen racism and xenophobia. However, media coverage is at times nostalgic for a more bounded sense of home and nation and often emphasizes players' individual mobility, erasing the economic and political conditions that have brought Latin American players to the United States. The author shows how these tensions play out in Chicago superstation WGN's coverage of Cubs star Sammy Sosa, who has emerged as a national hero in both the U.S. and the Dominican Republic.

There is the moment before every Major League Baseball (MLB) game when the fans rise perfunctorily to mutter the words to the national anthem, turning in the direction of a flag that most of them cannot see or do not bother to seek out. Children eat hot dogs, already bored; men doff their caps and balance beer cups in one hand, already drunk; people who have brought homemade signs wave them, already convinced they will not get on television. Yet after the events of September 11, the routine was no longer routine. It was denaturalized, and all the taken-for-granted elements of the national pastime—that baseball is the epitome of competition, good sportsmanship, nationalism, and masculinity and hence an arena for defining what it means to be American—were suddenly called out for rearticulation.

That was no clearer than at Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs, where on September 27, the Cubs played their rival in the division title chase, the Houston Astros, in the first game at Wrigley since the attacks. As did nearly all MLB teams, the Cubs organized a pregame ceremony in honor of the victims and heroes of September 11. No one could miss the flags
draped across the apartment buildings that surround Wrigley Field. Eyes became teary when the Chicago Police Department’s bagpipes and drums of the Emerald Society played “Amazing Grace,” and Cubs’ catcher Joe Girardi, who had played 4 years for the New York Yankees, gave a speech that ended with his voice breaking. After the game, he told a reporter, “Sometimes you just can’t hold back tears. Men are supposed to portray an image of toughness but [the tragedy] just hit too close to home” (Reader, 2001). But the clincher came when the Cubs’ star, right fielder and home run slugger, Sammy Sosa, a native of the Dominican Republic, stepped to the plate in the first inning and lofted a homer into right-center field. As he rounded first base, coach Billy Williams handed him a flag, and Sosa carried it around the bases to thunderous applause, waving it again after emerging from the dugout for a curtain call. One fan held up a sign that read “In Uncle Sammy we trust.” Commentators praised Sosa’s timing and his conduct (as appropriately humble); even the opposing pitcher, Shane Reynolds, conceded that “it was patriotic” (a concession facilitated by the Astros’ 6-5 win). The next morning, Sosa was for a moment baseball’s ambassador of patriotism, as the image of him holding a flag, head slightly bowed as he rounded the bases, was replayed constantly by television news and sports shows around the country. Sosa’s act became the opportunity for celebrating baseball’s diversity, an indicator of a great and tolerant United States (as opposed to the intolerant enemy). One MLB columnist wrote that Sosa was a very appropriate player to carry the flag, for “coming from less materially blessed circumstances in the Dominican Republic, the man may have a more genuine appreciation for some aspects of the American dream than many Americans” (Bauman, 2001).

Sosa is one of many Latinos—now roughly 25% of major league players—who have redefined the “national” in “national pastime,” no small feat given the strength of that association. In 1976, for example, Michael Novak, author of The Joy of Sports, wrote (quoted in Sobchack, 1997) that

baseball is as close a liturgical element of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant myth as the nation has. It is a cerebral game, designed as geometrically as the city of Washington itself, born out of the Enlightenment and the philosophies beloved of Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton. It is to games what the Federalist papers are to books. (p. 189)

The articulation of Sosa, a Black Dominican for whom English is a second language, to patriotism following September 11 illustrates that not only is Novak’s characterization no longer true but also that no one wants it to be true. Baseball still tells a powerful story about the greatness of America, but America is now inclusive, indeed more representative of all of the Americas. The role that Latinos have played in this redefinition of the national pastime can be gauged partially by the rise of Sosa to national/international hero, a status gained during the 1998 season when he and the St. Louis Cardinals’ Mark McGwire competed to break Roger Maris’s nearly 30-year
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create the illusion of upward mobility—in focusing on individual stars, does baseball elide the material conditions of inequality in the home countries in part by holding stars responsible for philanthropic efforts (as Sammy Sosa with hurricane relief in the Dominican Republic)? The answers to these questions hinge in no small part on where and how baseball is disseminated via media technologies—newspaper, radio, broadcast, cable, and satellite coverage and, to some degree, on new media technologies linked to the Internet and sports computer games. In this article, I focus on television, which is still the primary media-ating technology of private and public for most U.S. households, presenting, in different ways, the same dilemma it has since the 1950s: Does television sanitize images for armchair tourists? And/or does it present new places and identities in a nonthreatening yet potentially expansive manner (see Morley, 2000; Spigel, 1997)?

These questions have been reframed by globalization and new media technologies; as such, this article is also a contribution to the developing conversation about globalized, mediated sport, situated in what Wenner (1998) described as the "corporate landscape that has come to define the upper echelon of what can only be called MediaSport" (p. 4). ABC's ESPN International now reaches more than 127 million households in 150 countries; Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., which among its many holdings includes Fox, Fox Sports, and the Los Angeles Dodgers, reaches two thirds of the world's television households (Bellamy, 1998, p. 77). In the global economy, however, other sites do not drop out; as Randy Martin and Toby Miller (1999) argued,

In sport, the national, global, local, and personal coexist through the same practice, although all of these spatial configurations may spin in different directions rather than support each other. The geography of sport is not calibrated on any single map, and the affiliations and attentions that point to powers not subsumed by the national take place on grounds that are at once local, national, and global. (p. 12)

We must attend to these different sites, to their complex interrelationships, so as to understand power, access, and mobility—who is moving where, under what conditions, with what effects. This article begins to answer those questions in relation to Latinos, baseball, and television by examining, in the Foucauldian sense, how the material dissemination and televisual representation of Latino baseball players make possible the statement of certain truths about race, ethnicity, and gender.

The redefinition of the national pastime has occurred simultaneously with the expansion of baseball on cable and satellite into most middle- and upper-class homes in the United States as well as throughout parts of the world. These material changes have reshaped baseball's self-representation; for example, ESPN now offers a block of programming in Spanish on Sunday evenings, ESPN Deportes TV. Also, even during games announced in English, ESPN sometimes deploys its Spanish-speaking baseball reporter,
Alvaro Martín. At one game, for example, when the Cubs’ rookie pitcher Rubén Quevedo’s parents were in the stands, Martín interviewed the Venezuelan couple in Spanish, providing his own immediate translations. Other baseball announcers now even try to pronounce Spanish names correctly. In stark contrast to his grandfather, the famously crude Cubs’ announcer Harry Caray, who mispronounced Latino names with great relish, his grandson and new Cubs’ announcer, Chip Caray, is taking Spanish lessons, pronouncing some Latino surnames with an impressive accent, and even sprinkling his commentary with Spanish phrases.

Yet there is an underside to this valorization of Latino identity: the erasure of the many material inequalities that produce Major League Baseball’s profits. Latin American ballplayers are signed by U.S. scouts for small sums and often languish for years in the minors, sometimes ending up as undocumented workers in U.S. cities. The viability of Latin American leagues has been hurt as the best players try to make it in the United States; Major League Baseball functions as any multinational corporation, weakening local economies by encouraging dependence on an external power. Furthermore, media coverage and broadcasters’ banter often reveals an undercurrent of the fear of invasion from the South combined with versions of nostalgia for the time when the game was truly a game—a purely American game. This nostalgia for a time when borders seemed more imperious and the location of home and nation more clearly defined is reflected in the recent valorization of local and regional sports by Fox Sports Net. One series of their commercials, for example, depicts various “barbaric” sports acts in unnamed “third world” countries and ends with the tag line: “Fox Regional Sports. Sports news from the only region you care about. Yours.”

This nostalgia reveals the ongoing power of national identity—precisely because of globalization; television, as David Morley (2000) said, functions powerfully to shape the national sense of who belongs and who does not (p. 118). Baseball on U.S. television becomes particularly interesting in light of citizenship construction because there are so few Latinas/os elsewhere on television; baseball and some other professional sports, such as boxing, is one of the few genres in which Latino representation matches or surpasses their demographic representation (in fact, one of the few series for adults that focuses on a Latino family—Showtime’s Resurrection Boulevard—features a family of boxers). Of course, national borders are constantly traversed; television helps to create imagined communities between Latinas/os throughout the United States and Latin Americans in their home countries. As Arjun Appadurai (1996) said, television produces a “mutual contextualising of motion and mediation” as “moving images meet deterritorialised viewers. Important new diasporic public spheres are created and sustained that quite transcend the orbit of the nation state” (p. 4).

However, the degree to which a “diasporic public sphere is created” will depend on who has access to participation in that sphere—hence on the broader social, political, and economic conditions for Latinos and Latin American immigrants in the United States. I argue here that for the influx
of Latinos in baseball to have a beneficial impact on race and ethnic relations in the United States, the dissemination and representation of baseball must foreground the connections and power relations that shape people's movement between places: for example, between Chicago, the Dominican Republic, and small towns throughout the rural United States, where Latino immigrants move in search of employment in meat-packing and chicken processing plants. In the terms of geographer Massey (1994),

Instead, then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences, and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region, or even a continent. And this in turn allows a sense of place which is extraverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local. (p. 155)

Baseball has played an important role in making these connections, possibly reshaping ideas about Latino and U.S. identity for some baseball fans. However, this progressive potential is also limited because the various places that are linked remained bounded rather than overlapping; the discourse on Latin ballplayers has definitely redefined the American pastime, yet not often in a manner that shows the imbrications of the national, the global and the local, and the power imbalances wrought by globalization and lived at the level of the local.

BASEBALL AND TELEVISION

The development of baseball in Latin America has its origins in U.S. imperialism; although baseball historians differ on the exact moment when baseball was introduced in the various countries of the Caribbean and Central and South America, its inception and dissemination were linked to U.S. Manifest Destiny in the latter half of the 19th century (see Regalado, 1998, chap. 2). Some historians argue that U.S. troops stationed in Cuba in the 1860s introduced baseball there and that in 1891 two Cuban brothers brought baseball to the Dominican Republic. Baseball quickly expanded into Puerto Rico, Mexico, and elsewhere in Latin America. Players and fans, many of whom resented U.S. dominance even as they loved the game, adapted baseball to their own end, occasionally beating the United States at their own game; Dominican teams took on U.S. military teams when the United States occupied the Dominican Republic in 1916. The countries developed their own amateur and professional leagues, which became a source of intense nationalism during intercountry competition. Not surprisingly, U.S. scouts soon started thinking of Latin players as themselves valuable exports. Actually, the first Cubans played for the Cincinnati Reds in 1911, 36 years before Jackie Robinson became the first Black in the major leagues. When fans and reporters grew suspicious about the dark skin of outfielders Armando Marsans and Rafael Almeida, the club released a
report saying they were “two of the purest bars of Castillian soap ever floated to these shores” (Bjorkman, 1994, p. 323).

Robinson’s 1947 debut opened the door for more Latin American players; U.S. scouts no longer had to play the legitimization game in terms of skin color. Although many Latin Americans were recruited and signed to either training camps in their own countries or sent to the minor leagues, few would actually make it to the big leagues. Those who did have told stories of racism and xenophobia, of living in a time when Latinos were considered highly exotic and when a baseball fan’s only televisual familiarity would have been Desi Arnaz, the Cuban star of I Love Lucy, a show that in many ways reinforced stereotypes of the charismatic Latin lover/entertainer. The situation was especially bad for Black Latin Americans, who came from more integrated homelands (although racial hierarchies certainly existed), some of these players were the first to integrate their teams in the United States—even though Black Latinos rarely get credit for their role in integrating baseball. Many players had to go through minor league clubs in the deep South before reaching the majors, which was difficult both in terms of race and language. Conditions were not necessarily better in small towns throughout the North where Latinos had never set foot, and where Latino minor leaguers were perceived as unwelcome Others.

Latin American players also faced a set of stereotypes based on racist double standards, as noted by baseball historian Peter Bjorkman (1994):

If Pete Rose charged an opponent on the base paths or crashed into a catcher defending home plate, he would be praised by fans as Charlie Hustle. . . . But should [Puerto Rican first baseman Orlando] Cepeda play with the same fire-in-the-eye enthusiasm, he could count on being labeled a hot dog or a showboat.

(p. 229)

Other players, including Roberto Clementé, were stereotyped as moody and oversensitive to injuries, when other players who were often sullen—such as the White star Ted Williams—were perceived in purely individual terms. And some players, including Cepeda and Dominican pitcher Juan Marichal, encountered sheer hatred on the part of their managers: San Francisco Giants’ Alvin Dark, who banned the speaking of Spanish in the clubhouse and dugout, attributed team difficulties to the “many Spanish-speaking and Negro players on the team. . . . They are not able to perform up to the White ball players when it comes to mental alertness” (quoted in Bjorkman, 1994, pp. 96-97).

We can partially attribute these circumstances to ignorance about Latin American culture and to the fact that given the relatively small numbers of Latino ballplayers, U.S. baseball fans had no need to really come to terms with their presence either in baseball or, in most areas of the country, in other aspects of life. Furthermore, television was only beginning to shape baseball’s meanings; fans relied primarily on radio, which, as Vivian Sobchack (1997) noted, “hid the increasing racialization and hybridization
of the game" (p. 183). Chicago's WGN aired its first telecast of a Cubs game in 1948. NBC provided the first live coverage of the World Series in 1949, when fewer than 12% of U.S. households had television sets (Zimbalist, 1992, p. 149). There was steady growth in the 1950s and 1960s: Radio and television broadcasting revenues together contributed only 3% of MLB revenues in 1946 but 16.8% by 1956 (Zimbalist, 1992, p. 149). Television revenues alone for major league teams tripled between 1956 and 1960 (to $3.25 million) and grew to $16.6 million in 1970, $47.5 million in 1980, and $385 million in 1990.

National television helped produce a U.S. identity that cohered around baseball as the quintessential American sport, articulated through fan allegiance to teams in their regions. By the early 1980s, that sense of local/national identity was interrupted by the recognition of global influences. The Mexican pitching star Fernando Valenzuela, who made his debut with the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1981, marked something of a turning point in baseball's sense of clear boundaries. Valenzuela was really the first Latino star for the Dodgers and proved a source of great pride for the large Mexican American community in Los Angeles; he publicly valued his Mexican identity, in part by speaking Spanish without apology. The national and Los Angeles media were so impressed with the 20-year-old pitcher that they found interpreters rather than press the star to respond in broken English. Much of his fame among the Mexican American population was facilitated by the Spanish-language media, including radio station KTNQ, which, with its 31 affiliates, broadcast games on the evenings Valenzuela pitched; one of the affiliates reached Mexico City. Throughout 1981 and 1982, the Mexican television network Televisa carried the games Valenzuela pitched (Regalado, 1998, p. 182). He won the Rookie of the Year award and the Cy Young award (for best pitcher in the league) and was invited to lunch with U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Mexican President Jose Lopez de Portillo. Valenzuela's image was expressed in terms of national identity—a Mexican star refusing to kowtow to U.S. biases about the national pastime; yet at the same time, the coverage of his career revealed the impossibility of maintaining clear national boundaries. The Dodgers, for example, clearly wanted to exploit his potential to attract Mexican American and Mexican fans in Los Angeles.

At roughly the same historical moment, the three networks as disseminators of information and sports to the nation began to lose interest in baseball; the gradual demise of network domination can be seen in many ways as concurrent with the waning influence of the nation-state in a global economy. In 1993, Broadcasting & Cable reported that “questions loom about the general appeal of the sport as television programming,” and executives predicted a 30% or more decline in broadcast rights fees beyond 1993. CBS incurred serious losses on its baseball deals in the early 1990s and subsequently reduced its number of nationally telecast games (McClellan, 1993, p. 42); ABC stopped its Monday night baseball tradition, and ESPN
picked it up. The 1994 baseball strike produced even more network pessimism.

At the same time, cable was expanding its reach—this, of course, meant a shift in terms of access as more viewers were forced to pay for cable services to see games that had previously been offered for free on networks. Basic and pay cable began growing dramatically in the late 1970s; by the beginning of the 1990s, 95% of U.S. television homes had access to cable (Wasko, 1994, p. 85). Who can afford to subscribe to cable is a more complicated issue, however, especially with cable rates rising in many areas of the country. Although the deregulatory Telecommunications Act of 1996 was supposed to create heightened competition and lower rates, neither has happened in many markets, according to consumer advocates. The Federal Communications Commission reported in June 2000 that “rates of regulated cable systems without direct competition increased about 6.4% between 1998 and 1999” (Barmann, 2000, p. 1).

Although networks’ interest in baseball picked up a bit in the late 1990s, the traditional three broadcast stations—ABC, CBS, and NBC—still have much less of a hold than cable networks do. A survey conducted by Broadcasting & Cable in 2000 showed that the number of regular season baseball games on broadcast TV stations dropped steadily between 1996 and 2000, whereas the number of games on regional cable networks grew steadily (McAvoy, 2000, p. 36). Cable has become the new champion of the local fan. Yet “local” and “regional” are misnomers, in a way—for most cable stations, such as Fox Sports, are part of global media conglomerates such as Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp.

In the age of globalization, television’s markets have obviously greatly expanded and dispersed, with sports constituting a venue that simultaneously offers tourism and security, the exotic and the familiar. In 1999, for example, a new cable station called Global Sports Network was formed; its advertisements feature the headline “Global Sports With Culture.” The network imagines itself as a kind of tourism, bringing the global into the domestic living room, a process eased through references to culture and diversity; sports is an easy way to feel cosmopolitan. As an ad in Broadcasting & Cable said, Global Sports Network offers “U.S. and Global programming that speaks directly to today’s growing multicultural audience. GSN Global Sports With Culture will change the way you watch sports.” Another ad pictures a Black man and a Black woman, separated by a globe that rests partially on each of their shoulders. They’re laughing, happy—the apparent ambassadors of cricket; beneath their images are these words: “Do ya know about cricket? Do ya wanna?”

Yet in the midst of this connectedness to other cultures—in a manner, breaking down boundaries in the interest of a global sports community—there is also a backlash, a nostalgic longing for a time when sports produced a more clearly delineated sense of national identity processed through regional and local affiliations. In 1995, Fox devised a plan for a regional cable sports channel that would combine national and local news, with an
emphasis in its advertising pitch on the local as a contrast to ESPN's national and global emphases. Throughout the last half of the 1990s, Fox Sports Net made a significant run at ESPN's dominance in the national sports ratings; by 1999, Fox Sports consisted of 12 owned-and-operated stations, reached 68 million homes via 21 regional sports networks, and served as the cable home to 70 of the 76 National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, and Major League Baseball franchises (McAvoy, 2000, p. 32; Schlosser, 1999, p. 23). Ironically, then, in the context of its global and national dominance, Fox Sports represents itself as a local station. For example, each of the 22 regional networks features a nightly local sports program; the director of Fox Sports, Jeff Shell, said, "We've always believed that given the clutter on the live events front, viewers will gravitate to the local game versus the national game" (quoted in Schlosser, 1999, p. 24).

As Massey (1994) noted, however, the local can quickly devolve into the xenophobic, which takes the form of enclosed definitions of home

where there is imagined to be the security of a [false, as we have seen] stability and an apparently reassuring boundedness. Such understandings of the identity of places require them to be enclosures, to have boundaries and—therefore and most importantly—to establish their identity through negative counterpositions with the Other beyond the boundaries. (p. 169)

In 2000, Fox Sports began running a series of blatantly racist commercials for its regional networks. Each commercial opens with two visibly "different," usually dark-skinned, newscasters who are speaking an "exotic" language. The commercial then shifts to a scene of a sporting event, portrayed as authentic but exaggerated in its attempt to capture the "barbaric" nature of sports in other countries—a man diving off a cliff into a pile of dirt, with scorers then raising cards of "9.8," and so forth. In another, a man riding a bicycle is pursued by a frenzied gang waving lassos; one of the pursuers ropes the bicyclist and pulls him off the bike. As the image fades out, the screen flashes this message: "Fox Regional Sports. Sports news from the only region you care about. Yours."

A series of commercials during a baseball game between the Chicago White Sox and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays illustrates Fox Sports' alternating appeals to local and global sentiments within corporate sponsorship. First, there is a quick commercial for regional sports: Fox Sports Chicago, for "all your local sports news." Then, a commercial for Fox Sports global coverage features a rapid succession of figures blending into each other across the screen: "88 contract negotiations a week, 247 sports shows, 421 games, millions of stories—and one unique perspective," as the image of sportscaster Keith Oberman floats at the viewer—apparently, he brings it all together in a Sunday evening show that connects the local to the global. The third commercial strikes a nostalgic chord for the national pastime: As "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" plays softly, the viewer sees sepia-tinted images of baseball fields, gloves, mitts, helmets, then children playing ball. The Chicago White
the local as a contrast to ESPN's dominance in the national scene of 12 owned-and-operated regional sports networks, and served by the National Basketball Association, National Football League, and other professional and college franchises (McAvo, 2000, p. 32; in Schlosser, 1999, p. 24). Sox have donated $1 million to renovate 800 youth baseball diamonds in Chicago “so the kids can play.” Finally, an auto parts commercial features a White Sox player and a Latino salesmen who speaks with an obvious accent. At last, we are back to the game, where White Sox reliever Lorenzo Barcelo is just taking the mound. In addition to appealing to local, national, and global sentiments, this series of commercials shows how Fox is both caught in stereotypes about Latinos (automobiles, waiting on Whites), yet cognizant of their growing market power, and to the recognition that Latinos watch baseball games because so many Latinos play.

Fox Sports tries to reassure the viewer that he can have his local sports and travel the world as well, returning safely to his regional team/domestic identity. Ultimately, then, this configuration reinforces pride in the national pastime of baseball yet not without some stretching of the concept of “the national.” In fact, the global influences of players such as Sammy Sosa have revived interest in the game; often crediting the 1998 home run race between McGwire and Sosa for reviving fans’ faith in the game, both networks and cable have recently scrambled for the rights to carry Major League Baseball, with ABC the only network professing little interest in over-the-air packages (McClellan, 2000, p. 26). The president of NBC Sports, Ken Schanzier, said in the spring of 2000 that NBC was very eager to fend off competition from CBS, in contrast to pessimism about baseball during the early 1990s. During the last few months of the 1998 season, when the home run chase peaked, ESPN's baseball ratings rose 20% from the previous year, Fox's rose 13%, and WGN's rose 38% (Sherman, 1998, p. 5).

Yet this redefinition of the nation occurs without a redistribution of resources—it is predicated on a national identity that assumes mobility to be purely a matter of individual talent. Materiality, in other words, is a question not just of access to cable and television but of how the representation of baseball on television elides the material conditions of Latinos in the United States and of Latin Americans. Images of Sammy Sosa in Wrigley Field, for example, erase the economic reality of the many Latinos in Chicago; the thousands of workers, for instance, who keep the restaurants and hotels of Chicago operating but cannot afford the price of a ticket, cannot get the time off from work to attend a game, and, if undocumented, may live in constant fear of deportation.

Baseball perpetuates the illusion of upward mobility and suggests to U.S. viewers that players can transcend the poverty of Latin America if they only work hard enough, at which point they are granted access to the American dream. This idea is illustrated in a recent Major League Baseball television commercial on CNBC during its morning news program. A young, brown-skinned child sits in a schoolroom somewhere, obviously not meant to be the United States. Everyone keeps calling him “Samuel,” and he keeps responding “My name is Pedro.” The commercial is in Spanish with English subtitles. On the bus, he says to a friend, “Look, here’s my picture”—but the viewer does not see the picture. When he gets off the bus and runs into his house, his mother addresses him as “Samuel.” He goes into his bedroom and
says, "I'm Pedro"—and the camera pans to a poster of Boston Red Sox star pitcher Pedro Martínez, who is from the Dominican Republic.

This emphasis on individual mobility is somewhat mitigated by the national pride around Latin American identity that stars such as Sosa and Martínez help produce: An international Latinidad has developed around baseball heroes who have made it in the United States, uniting Latinos across borders, and this process has been facilitated by satellite TV. As Martin and Miller (1999) described it, "The geography of sport is also made tangible by the migrations of touring athletes, who triangulate home and away with the various sites of their televised reception" (p. 11). And due to this very triangulation, Latin American ballplayers such as Martínez and Sosa become heroes not only for Latin American children but also for Latino and non-Latino children in the United States. If it is true that "one of the few places where heroes can still be found is sports" (Vande Berg, 1998, p. 134), then Latin American and Latino baseball stars have redefined the very notion of a national identity articulated through sports stars.

Yet the inspiration generated by Latin American heroes does not go far beyond their individual philanthropic efforts in terms of transforming material conditions for most people in their home countries. In his history of baseball in the Dominican Republic, Alan Klein (1991) said that baseball there is both "their best hope for the future and a leading cause of their underdevelopment," as many young men pursue this dream without thinking of other options. Despite the hope that baseball offers a way out of poverty and a redemption for the nation, it has not produced those effects: "For all the success that the Dominicans have enjoyed at baseball, 80% of the people are unemployed or underemployed, and the economic benefits of baseball must be negligible" (p. 60). Much as multinational corporations exploit the resources of vulnerable countries, widening the gap between rich and poor, so does major league baseball exploit the Latin American leagues. U.S. teams have established baseball academies in the Dominican Republic; thousands of hopeful youths join the academies rather than participating in the Dominican amateur leagues, a phenomenon that also occurs in Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Mexico, Nicaragua, and other Latin American countries considered to be prime sites for U.S. scouts. Furthermore, when Latino stars return to their countries during the off-season, few want to play in the winter leagues in part because their U.S. teams fear injuries.

Finally, televised coverage of Latino stars elides the fact that many of the players who are signed to play in the United States never make it. They are either cut from the team completely or languish in the minor league. Major league executives do not seem bothered by this occurrence; New York Mets General Manager Steve Phillips was quoted in the Chicago Tribune as saying "You can develop 30 to 45 players from the Dominican for what it costs to sign a second-round draft pick in the States" (Rogers, 1998a, p. 3). Major League Baseball itself estimates that "80% to 95% of Latino players signed to contracts never reach the big leagues" (quoted in Breton, 2000, pp. 14-15); furthermore, the money that players receive to sign is a tiny fraction
of what U.S. players receive. As Marcus Breton wrote, Sammy Sosa received $3,500 to sign with the Texas Rangers in 1986—the same amount that the Brooklyn Dodgers paid Jackie Robinson in 1946. Players in the United States with star potential often receive around $1 million to sign. Baseball players’ mobility is part of the power geometry that Massey (1994) described:

Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: Some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. (p. 149)

WGN, SAMMY, AND TOURISM

The Tribune Co., owner of both the Cubs and the media entities that cover the Cubs, has long recognized the profits to be generated from rhetorical appeals to the local—Chicago—and a global material presence through cable and satellite. Jim Dowd, the Tribune’s top broadcasting executive, told Broadcasting & Cable, “Whatever television station is on the air today really must develop a concise game plan for the future, and ours is a strong local identity through news and sports” (“Tribune’s Tower,” 1993, p. 15). As such, the Cubs become ambassadors for Chicago as games and other coverage of the team are disseminated via the various media arms of the Tribune—WGN-TV, WGN radio, The Chicago Tribune newspaper, and Tribune Interactive, a network of Web sites that ranks among the top 25 news/entertainment networks in the United States. Since being traded to the Cubs from their cross-town rivals, the White Sox, in 1993, Sosa has become the most visible representative of the Cubs; especially since the 1998 home run race, Sosa has prompted sellout crowds not only in Chicago’s Wrigley Field but in visiting ballparks, where cameras flash by the dozens every time Sosa comes to bat, fans attempting to capture him in his signature act. Broadcast and cable coverage of games at opposing teams’ fields, combined with WGN coverage of roughly 100 Cubs games a year, mean that millions of viewers across the country receive an image of Chicago articulated through the so-called friendly confines of quaint Wrigley Field—the oldest park in the country, with ivy-covered outfield walls and the only nonmechanized scoreboard remaining in the major leagues. Sammy is intimately connected to the famous right-field bleacher bums. Before every game, he races out to his position in right field and slates them; often, a group of four bare-chested young men stand side by side in the bleachers, with the letters “S,” “O,” “S,” and “A” painted on their bodies.

Yet if Sammy is the most visible representative of Chicago, he simultaneously complicates the notion of tourism in the heart of the United States, globalizing the local and the national through his constant references to his “real” home—the Dominican Republic. After every homerun, Sosa returns to the dugout, looks directly into the camera, and blows a kiss to his mother, who is presumably watching via satellite in his hometown of San Pedro de
Macorís. After his 1998 season, furthermore, Sosa could often been seen in tourism advertisements for the Dominican Republic. Dressed in white, with happy tourists frolicking on the beach behind him, he invites U.S. audiences to visit “his country.” For television viewers throughout the United States, thus, Sammy represents the simultaneous integration and distancing of the Latino immigrant: he speaks for Chicago as long as he wears the Cubs’ uniform, but dressed in street clothes, he is back in the Dominican Republic, welcoming them to his country, his real home. Thus, although there is a direct connection established between Chicago, the Dominican Republic, and the homes of U.S. television viewers, it is a connection dependent on the individual mobility of tourism. Not surprisingly, Sammy as the Dominican tourist representative appears on a sparkling beach, not in his hometown of San Pedro, where children shine shoes to make a living (as he did) and adults labor in sugar factories owned by multinational corporations (as his stepfather did). Sammy’s touristic appeal produces a connection between Chicago and the Dominican Republic, both represented as sites of tourism for the “mainstream” baseball fan sitting in his or her living room.

Given the imperialism and racist history of baseball that I have traced above, it is not hard to understand Sosa’s modesty, be it intentional or not. And although premised on individual mobility, his rise to fame nevertheless has implications for the collective identity that baseball viewing constitutes. History suggests that Anglo baseball fans, especially men, would more likely identify with McGwire, and that to be accepted, given his Blackness and his accent, Sosa would have to pay homage to that history. Likened variously to Paul Bunyon and John Wayne, McGwire is the prototypical all-American slugger. A large man with huge forearms and reddish hair, McGwire, already in his mid-30s, had an established reputation as a homerun hitter. A fitter version of Babe Ruth, he clearly was the fans’ favorite to break a record set in 1961 by Roger Maris, who was a Yankee like Ruth and therefore an acceptable replacement for the legend. The sequence thus made sense in terms of race: Ruth, Maris, McGwire. In fact, when the African American star Hank Aaron broke Ruth’s career-long home run record of 714 in 1973, he was the victim of racist hate mail and death threats. Not surprisingly, then, an August 1998 USA Today poll of 5,800 readers found that 79% of those surveyed wanted McGwire to break the record, compared to only 16% for Sosa (Sullivan, 1998d, p. 1). The national media also favored McGwire as well as Ken Griffey Jr., an African American player who had also demonstrated potential to break the single-season record. In July, Time magazine featured Griffey and McGwire on the cover, with only a short story about Sammy inside, even though Sosa had just broken a major league record for most homers in a month by hitting 20 in June. Shortly thereafter, Sports Illustrated put McGwire on its cover.

Eventually, however, the media could no longer ignore the numbers: The race was likely to be between McGwire and Sosa, not McGwire and Griffey. Sosa had already laid a groundwork of modesty, as if aware that he was not in a position to steal McGwire’s thunder. When reporters asked him
how he felt about the *Sports Illustrated* cover, Sosa said, “McGwire deserves it. . . . I don’t have any kind of jealous feelings toward him. To me, he’s the man who’s going to break the record” (quoted in Sullivan, 1998a, p. 3). The race seemed to be as much about conduct as it was about hitting prowess, and Sammy bore the greater weight of proving that he could be a good sport, given the history of stereotypes about Latinos as hotheads, hot dogs, and so forth, as I described above—stereotypes to which Sammy himself had already been subjected. For example, *Tribune* sports columnist Skip Bayless (1998c) congratulated Sosa in 1998 for maturing into a respectable Chicago sports hero, a transformation from the Sosa of the early 1990s, who “wore enough jewelry to open his own discount shop back in San Pedro de Macoris.” Sosa, added Bayless, was a “Perro Caliente,” or “hot dog,” without the “hot.” Sosa swung at so many wild pitches, said Bayless, that “it was hard to tell which he knew better, English or baseball fundamentals” (p. 1).

It is impossible to say to what degree Sosa enacted the modest immigrant game as a savvy strategy, all the while gritting his teeth. If it was a performance, it was a very credible one, in which Sosa steadfastly maintained that McGwire would be the one to break the record; “he’s the man” became Sosa’s mantra. He could even be heard reciting the line made famous in a *Saturday Night Live* skit, “Baseball’s been bery, bery good to me.” Sosa constantly paid homage to “America,” something sportswriters were quick to pick up on, in addition to frequently retelling the story of how Sammy’s family was so poor that as a child, he had to shine shoes to help them survive, a narrative that fit right into the myth of the United States as land of color-blind immigrant opportunity. As *Tribune* writer Paul Sullivan (1998c) began one story, “Sammy Sosa insists he’s not Superman, though he speaks as though he is in constant pursuit of truth, justice, and the American way” (p. 1). In the same article, Sosa claimed McGwire would be the one to break Maris’s record, “But if I do break it, God bless America.” When the polls showed the majority of people rooting for McGwire to break the record, Sosa (quoted in Sullivan, 1998e, p. 2) went so far as to deny that race played a factor in shaping these opinions:

> Race doesn’t have anything to do with it. Everyone knows I’m here and I play the game the way it’s supposed to be played. . . . To me, color doesn’t make any difference. It’s all about human beings. It’s all about who you are inside.

Good conduct fueled the revitalization of the American pastime, which turned out to be good for the business of baseball; the corporate sponsors of ballparks and stars had no trouble incorporating Sosa’s “differences,” which for them were more indicators of personality than nationality. Nova Lanktree of Lanktree Sports, a company that negotiates deals between athletes and advertisers, said Sammy’s charm (quoted in Armour, 1998) turns his “language handicap” into an asset: “Sammy has done something with his personality that just may transcend what is usually a handicap. His
personality is shining through. He exudes charm. Nothing about him is not charming . . . making his future fertile for marketing” (p. 3).

The two sluggers were repeatedly praised for revitalizing the game through their generosity and sportsmanlike combat in the midst of the grueling race, which had reporters dogging the two players for much of August and September. As luck would have it, McGwire broke Maris’s record when the Cardinals were hosting the Cubs in St. Louis; before that game, the two held a press conference at which they entertained the media, prompting this description (Bayless, 1998b) by the Tribune: “Their answers represented what is right with baseball and pro sports. They laughed, high-fived, set up each other’s punch lines, fed off each other just the way they’ve been doing at the plate” (p. 1). After McGwire hit homer number 62, Sosa ran in from right-field, and in a scene that would be replayed multiple times across the nation for the next few days, gave his rival a hug, to which McGwire responded by trying, not too successfully, to imitate some of Sammy’s trademark hand gestures to his heart and lips. The question of conduct is thus linked to sportsmanship and to the idea that baseball players are role models for the nation’s youth. Curiously, then, Sosa, with his strong attachment to the Dominican Republic, became an international/national role model: here’s how to be a good immigrant even as you represent the national pastime in a country that does not really recognize you as fully American. In fact, when Sosa broke Maris’s record—after McGwire did—Commissioner Selig appeared on WGN, at the Cubs’ special ceremonies, emphasizing Sosa’s conduct rather than his homeruns: “Your achievements are legendary, but more importantly, you’ve handled yourself with a class and dignity that has been unparalleled. . . . I thank you for being what you’ve been.” Sosa becomes the essentialized humble but wildly successful immigrant.

Gradually, this natural charm won Sammy the conduct competition even as he lost the homerun race, 70 to 66. As his stock rose and he remained deferential, his behavior was counterposed to the artificiality of stars thought to be in the game mainly for the money. Sammy did not want to be a star, in other words: It just happened because he so loves the game. That natural pursuit of the game for the sheer love of it reinvigorates an audience who has grown skeptical of the skyrocketing salaries; ironically, then, nostalgia is produced through the game’s association with Latin American players. During the heat of the competition, Sammy was always smiling, interacting with fans, signing autographs, joking with the media, blowing kisses to his mother, and even admitting to reporters that he cried while blowing these kisses after homerun number 62. For him, baseball was fun. The Tribune’s Skip Bayless (1998a) wrote, “Strange new sports concept: a $10 million a-year athlete who appears to be having even more fun playing than we are watching” (p. 1). Furthermore, Sosa was relentlessly imaged as a family man: his mother at home in the Dominican Republic and his wife Sonia at home in their Chicago apartment with their four children. His masculinity seems to naturally flow from his commitment to a traditional Latino family, devoted first and foremost to his mother.
the charm. Nothing about him is not for marketing" (p. 3).

They lauded, cried, set up just the way they've been doing at number 62, Sosa ran in from right—yed multiple times across the nation's heart, to which McGwire responded by. The image of Sammy's trademark hand gesture of conduct is thus linked to sports—ail players are role models for the boy, with his strong attachment to the national role model: here's the representation the national pastime in a you as fully American. In fact, when McGwire did—Commissioner Selig ceremonies, emphasizing Sosa's achievements are legendary, but more than a class and dignity that has been what you've been." Sosa becomes the successful immigrant.

on Sammy the conduct competition. As his stock rose and he remained the artificiality of stars money, Sammy did not want to be a cause he so loves the game. That nat—love of it renews an audience loving salaries; ironically, then, nonassociation with Latin American play—s, Sammy was always smiling, inter—king with the media, blowing kisses to the media, that he worked while blowing it. For him, baseball was fun. The Pri—ange new sports concept: a $10 mil—ion even more fun playing than we was relentlessly imaged as a family—ican Republic and his wife Sonia at their four children. His masculinity to a traditional Latino family, other.

By contrast, McGwire represented a more visibly constructed, almost uncomfortable kind of masculinity—more muscled, stern, aloof, and often complaining about the media hounding him and asking for more privacy. Even his image as a father seemed engineered. Although many people remember the image of McGwire hugging his 10-year-old son Matt, acting as the Cardinal batboy, on crossing the plate after hitting his 61st homer, that was also counterposed to the fact of McGwire's divorce. Matt had arrived only 10 minutes before the game, flying in from California, where he lives with his mother. The perception of McGwire having to work hard to love and represent the game was heightened when, in mid-season, he admitted to taking the steroid androstendione. Although the drug is legal in baseball and sold over the counter, McGwire still took a lot of criticism for it. Sosa refused to join the criticism, however, and only obliquely referenced his own position on steroids when he held up a bottle of Flintstone vitamins when being interviewed after his 55th homerun, joking that his power came from eating little Freds and Barneys. Sosa emerged as the "good, unselfish, modest but fun-loving Latino," a new stereotype to contrast the earlier historical image of the selfish hot dog. This image was enhanced by the fact that the Cubs won a wild card spot in the playoffs, whereas McGwire, whose Cardinals were not pennant contenders, seemed to be playing only for his own glory. After McGwire hit his 46th home run, Sosa told the press (quoted in Sullivan, 1999b), "I was capping when Mark hit that homerun. Everyone knows he's the man. He has a good chance to break the record. I'm in a different situation. I'm trying to win and catch Houston" (p. 3).

What emerges are hybrid forms of nationalism, in terms of both U.S. and Dominican identity. On one hand, U.S. national identity is left partially intact because Sosa continually recognizes his secondary position to McGwire; Sosa is a charismatic visitor who can stay as long as he keeps hitting homeruns. Inclusion is thus contingent on Sosa's refusal to make undue claims on the sport or the nation; he is not a pushy or a dependent guest. Sosa's temporary inclusion also allows for an expression of Dominican nationalism that is nonthreatening precisely because he is so charismatic, as welcoming as Dominican natives would be to U.S. tourists. He does not seem to be complaining, and he definitely is not militant. At the "Celebratin' Sammy" Day organized by the Cubs to honor Sosa for breaking the Maris record in September 1998, Sosa said in the WGN-television ceremony, "This is for all the Latin American people who supported me in 1998. And for Chi—ago: I love you. And for the right-field bleacher fans: I love you." Sammy's "people" are simultaneously Latin Americans, Chicagans (Latinos and oth—ers), and bleacher bums (who do seem to transcend nationality).

The ceremony indicated how Wrigley Field has become the hybrid space for these imbriicated levels of identity; to return to Massey's definitions of place, the ballpark represents a somewhat "extroverted" space of "stretched out social relations," in which Dominican differences are not subsumed for the sake of national consensus. On "Celebratin' Sammy" Day, hundreds of Dominican flags adorned the surrounding rooftops, fluttered
throughout the packed stands, and were officially attached to flagpoles atop Wrigley Field. Latin music filled the air; bilingual signs were everywhere: "Sammy es Grande," "Sosa Para Presidente," "Te Amamos, Sammy." Sammy's family, including his wife Sonia and children, his mother, his siblings, and his cousins, sat on chairs in the infield during the ceremony. Cubs' icon Ernie Banks waved a Dominican flag. Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig included Sosa with a list of baseball's greatest: "Your name will forever be linked to (Babe) Ruth, (Hank) Aaron, Maris, Ernie Banks, and Billy Williams." The great Dominican pitcher Juan Marichal read, in Spanish, announcements from various Dominican governmental officials, who praised Sosa for how he represents his country. Sosa thanked everyone, from God to his manager, and then graciously received the Cubs' gift—a stylish maroon convertible.

The so-called friendly confines of Wrigley Field are in fact friendly even to the millions of television viewers who may know nothing else about the Dominican Republic precisely because the hybridity is contained within the ballpark. U.S. viewers from suburban Chicago to rural North Dakota see both Chicago and the Dominican Republic as multicultural spaces, yet the multiculturalism is safely articulated through athletic prowess. As Morley (2000) described the televisival experience, drawing on Raymond Williams's concept of mobile privatization, consumers can visit

faraway locations [via sound and image] without leaving the comfort and security of their homes. They are thus enabled to simultaneously stay home and "go places," to remain in the realm of familiar ontological security and yet to experience the vicarious thrill of exhibited difference or exotica of one sort or another. (p. 9)

In this way, national identity is destabilized, but in a safe and limited fashion; there is no need to consider Latinos outside of baseball, either in Chicago or in the Dominican Republic. Even when the media left Wrigley Field for the Dominican Republic to tell Sosa's story during the homerun race, it did so only in the context of baseball, as if baseball were the only reason to talk about the country. For example, on the night McGwire hit his 61st homerun, a Tribune reporter filed his story from the center of Sammy's hometown, describing the various sights and sounds of the plaza that Sammy financed: WGN telecasting the game in the Hit Bar, disco music blaring out of the Sammy Club, the statue of Sammy himself in the center of the 30-30 plaza (so named because Sammy is the first Dominican player to have 30 homeruns and 30 stolen bases in a single season) (Hersch, 1998, p. 4).

The homerun race thus provided fans in the United States and the Dominican Republic a shared print and televisival space where different national identities came together in their love of Sosa and the Cubs (perennial losers who suddenly, due in no small part to Sosa, were division contenders). Satellite television in particular created a sense that this space was simultaneously experienced; as Morley (2000) put it, "The availability of
officially attached to flagpoles atop
buildings; bilingual signs were everywhere:
"Te Amamos, Sammy!" or "Amamos, Sammy!",
and children, his mother, his siblings in the
infield during the ceremony. Cubs' flag. Baseball Commissioner Bud
Page said Walt Jocketty's "Your name will fore-
shadow, Maris, Ernie Banks, and Billy
Williams, Juan Marichal, in Spanish,
and many governmental officials, who
were present. Sosa thanked everyone, from
the crowd and the Cubs' gift—a stylish
pair of sunglasses.

Wrigley Field is in fact friendly
to those who may know nothing else about
baseball. The crowd, with its diversity of
people from Chicago to rural North Dakota
and everywhere in between, is full of
athletic prowess. As Morley Safer,
drawing on Raymond Williams's
thesis, writes, "Without leaving the comfort and secu-
rity of home, they can experience and see
outside of baseball, either in Chi-

The story during the hot run, it
turns out, is that baseball was the only reason to
head west. McGwire hit his 61st
home run from the center of Sammy's home
and the sounds of the plaza that Sammy
was at, the Hit Bar, disco music blaring out
from a satellite. He has himself in the center of the 30-30
club, the first Dominican player to have 30
homers in a single season (Hersh, 1998, p. 4).

fans in the United States and the
world, television space where different
cultures have their love of Sosa and the Cubs (per-
sonal experience), were division contend-
ers. A sense that this space was created a sense that this space was

satellite television has the fundamental effect of synchronizing cultural
experiences across large distances" (p. 168). Thus, on the day that Chicago
was "Celebrating Sammy," his fans in the Dominican Republic were watching
the events on satellite; furthermore, WGN sent a reporter to San Pedro de
Macoris to capture residents' viewing experience and to re-create Sosa's
childhood for U.S. viewers. It was a moment frozen in time, pointing to the
future as articulated via baseball, with no reference to the past of U.S.

imperialism.

The scene from the Dominican Republic aired after about 10 minutes
spent recapping Sosa's remarkable season and before the awards ceremony
described above. WGN reporter Bob Jordan appears in a bar in San Pedro,
surrounded by Dominican men of different ages, all crowded around a small
television set. Jordan immediately establishes the Dominican Republic's
difference as "Other" in geographical and material terms: "If it looks like
we're in a cave, that's because we just lost electricity," he says with a smile.
"That happens quite often down here." He must then explain Sosa — whom
viewers have just seen on the field in Chicago, now a multimillionaire — to
his destitute place: "Sosa hasn't forgotten his roots. Let's take a look at
where the next Sammy might come from." Viewers next see a group of chil-
dren playing baseball in the streets; the camera focuses on 4-year-old Edgar,
who swings a broken table leg for a bat, hitting a plastic orange juice gallon
container that serves as a ball. Like Sosa, Edgar is charismatic: He has
trouble keeping up his pants and tugs at them in between swings while grinning
at the camera. And like Sosa, Edgar hits the ball hard, over the heads of the
other skinny kids. Cut to another ballfield, this time with older boys, prac-
ticing on a rough diamond, as their coach shouts instructions and Jordan, in a
voice-over, translates. The focus is Rafael Soleano, who at 16 has been called
by scouts and coaches "the next Sosa"; Jordan interviews him, and Rafael
says that, indeed, he dreams of following in Sosa's footsteps. After noting the
difficult conditions of practice ("slide into one of these bases on this hard
dirt, and you're likely to lose some skin"), Jordan ends on an optimistic
note, "More than anything, these bright-eyed youngsters love baseball." We
return to the bar, where the men are smiling and happy, as if conversing
with Jordan that baseball is cause for optimism. After a commercial break, U.S.
television viewers are back in Wrigley Field, where the awards ceremony is
about to begin, and Sosa will receive the keys to his new convertible.

What, then, are the implications of this shared television space for differ-
et audiences? We can imagine multiple scenarios, none of which will be
totally determining because of all the factors that shape television viewing
but that nevertheless provide some clues as to the political possibilities of
Latinos in baseball on television. The mainstream viewer in the
United States, one with little previous knowledge of the Dominican Republic, will at
least be connected, via armchair tourism, to a new site and recognize it as a
site of poverty. Perhaps the viewer will recognize his or her privilege,
noticing that the men in the Dominican Republic are congregating around one small television set, perhaps because they do not all own televisions. Perhaps U.S. viewers, especially women, will notice that no women or girls are present in these Dominican public spaces, either watching or playing ball. And perhaps U.S. viewers will admire Sosa for transcending his circumstances, hoping Edgar and Rafael will do the same.

For Dominicans and other Latinos in the United States, watching on cable or satellite in their homes, the scene may seem familiar and also inspire a pride in Latinidad that traverses but does not erase national boundaries; television, as Morley (2000) said, "helps to constitute new, transnational spaces of experience" (p. 168). Sosa’s successes may increase the confidence of young Latinos (but perhaps mainly boys) as a Latin American attains the status of global hero. Yet the emphasis on baseball as a viable route out of poverty may also seem like a quintessential element of the U.S. myth of self-reliance, eliding the other jobs, much less glamorous, that most Latin American immigrants are forced to do to survive in the United States. A certain alienation from the viewing experience may ensue.

For viewers in the Dominican Republic, the transition to Wrigley Field, where Sosa receives accolades and awards, there is likely a mixture of pride and despair, a desire to believe that Edgar, Rafael, and hundreds of others will make it big but also the recognition that most of them will not. Wrigley Field and San Pedro de Macorís are connected as if the space in between does not matter—the space of migration and struggle, the space that tells the story of who moves and under what conditions, and who does not move. San Pedro has gained global recognition as Sammy’s hometown; generally forgotten is the fact that it is a primary site in the multinational sugar industry and that baseball has not helped the overall economy. The imbalances in power that far exceed the stories of individual players will not be captured by WGN even though it is indeed experienced at the level of the local and everyday.

My analysis of this media coverage of Sosa returns us to the broader trends in sports/globalization/media discussed above; the coverage obviously acknowledges the crossing of borders, the globalization of the sport, yet it is inflected with forms of nostalgia and containment that assure U.S. viewers they may still retreat to a safe, bounded sense of home that removes sports from economic and political conditions. The televised images of Latino ballplayers have significantly redefined the notion of the American pastime, yet they have done so precisely by elevating the players above the very conditions that prompted their movement to the United States. However, although the dissemination of information and images of Latino ballplayers throughout the country will not necessarily prompt local residents to better understand the reasons behind migration and immigration trends of all Latinos, the case of Sosa, albeit imaged largely in terms of individual successes, indicates some possibilities for a better understanding of the inequities in access and mobility wrought via globalization.
A Republic are congregating around case they do not all own televisions. In this, will notice that no women or girls are in the picture. Either watching or playing space, either watching or playing space, Sosa for transcending his circumstances is the same.

In the United States, watching on scene may seem familiar and also verses but does not erase national pride, cited as a Latin American "helps to constitute new, transforming in a quintessential element of the U.S. society, much less glamorous, that most to do to survive in the United States. Experience may ensue.

Republic, the transition to Wrigley Field awards, there is likely a mixture of that Edgar, Rafael, and hundreds of cognition that most of them will not. Ris are connected as if the space in migration and struggle, the space under what conditions, and who does recognition as Sammy's hometown: a primary site in the multinational not helped the overall economy. The stories of individual players will not be more experienced at the level of the image of Sosa returns us to the broader discussion above; the coverage offers, the globalization of the sport, a sense and containment that assure U.S. bounded sense of home that removes conditions. The televised images of redefined the notion of the American dream by elevating the players above the movement to the United States. How-formation and images of Latino ballplayers necessarily prompt local residents and migration and immigration trends along largely in terms of individual for a better understanding of the fight via globalization.

1. As several sports scholars have noted, the scholarship on sports, media, and race is lacking—especially in regards to Latinos. More attention has been given to African Americans (Kinijima & Harris, 1998).

2. Spiro (1997) described how, historically, "broadcasting, like the telephone and telegraph before it, was seen as an instrument of social surveillance. . . . Numerous commentators extolled the virtues of television's antisocial spaces, showing how the medium would allow people to travel from their homes while remaining untouched by the actual social contexts to which they imaginatively ventured" (p. 215). Similarly, Morley (2000) argued that "the television's transmission into the home, the covalence of alterity is more strongly established than ever before, as that which is far away is made to feel both very much 'here'—right in our sitting rooms—and precisely 'now'" (p. 182).


4. Roberto Clemente, the great Pittsburgh Pirate star from Puerto Rico, struggled throughout the 1950s and 1960s to be called "Roberto" instead of "Bob" by the media and other sports personnel. My son has a baseball card of Clemente that calls him "Rob" Clemente." The Star was killed in an airplane crash on New Year's Eve of 1970 when he was on his way to deliver earthquake relief to people in Nicaragua.

5. Representations of baseball on film have been subject to various stages of nostalgia, as Sobchack (1997) noted. In particular, she comments on Ken Burns' 1994 PBS documentary Baseball, which she calls a "highly nostalgic and elegiac" exercise, less about "historical analysis" than about "constituting a collective memory" (p. 153).

6. For example, Dominican star Jorge (George) Bell describes the coldness with which he was treated in Helena, Montana, in his first minor league season: "The White players all had good apartments, but we Latinos were living in a witch house. We had money like the others but we couldn't rent anything, couldn't buy a car, nothing" (quoted in Bjorkman, 1994, p. 232).

7. This is not to say there was not still racism in the coverage of Valenzuela. Things got particularly ugly when Valenzuela negotiated for a better contract in 1982—one reporter titled his column "Is Fernando a bandito?" and advised the pitcher to "get on his knees and thank Our Lady of Guadalupe he's got a job" (quoted in Regaldo, 1986, p. 185).

8. Questions of access are also becoming more relevant in terms of the Internet, as more baseball teams turn to Webcasting their games. A recent report on the digital divide showed that White households are still more than twice as likely (40.8%) to own a computer than Black (19.3%) or Latino (19.4%) households.

9. The combined result of broadcast and cable telecasts in this period rose from 116.4 games per team to 128.7 games per team (out of a 162-game season).


11. In a similar fashion, the integration of Blacks into major league baseball following the debut of Jackie Robinson in 1947 led to the eventual demise of the Negro leagues.

12. The desire to succeed in U.S. baseball led a Dominican father to desperate measures in the case of Danny Almonte. The star pitcher for a championship Little League team from the Bronx, Almonte was actually 2 years older (14) than the Little League cut-off age of 12. His father, Felipe de Jesus Almonte, falsified Danny's birth certificate and passport; after Little League officials discovered the deception, they made the team forfeit all its wins. Furthermore, Dominican officials reported that Danny Almonte had not enrolled in school during the time he was in the Dominican Republic, between the ages of 6 and 16.

13. There are currently about 100 Dominicans in the major leagues.

14. Breton (2000), a newspaper reporter who has investigated the conditions of Latino ballplayers released from big-league teams, said that many "stay in the U.S. as
undocumented immigrants rather than return as ‘failures’ to a country that offers
them little future” (p. 15).
15. The Tribune Co. consists of Tribune Broadcasting, which owns and operates 22
major market television stations and 7 radio stations; Tribune Publishing, which
owns 11 newspapers; Tribune Regional Programming, which owns two 24-hour
cable news channels; and Tribune Interactive. The company claims to reach 80% of
U.S. television households. Detailed information on these holdings may be found at
www.tribune.com/about/index.html.

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