(Un)Mapping the Stadium: Contextualizing Race and National Myth Making in Major League Baseball

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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Abstract

This thesis examines how Major League Baseball functions as a pedagogy of citizenship by securing the white national subject through the consumption of racialized bodies. It remains critical to understand the productive geographies of sport in service of the nation through race and space. This paper explores the narratives of imperialism, nationalism, and militarism that are saturated in professional ballparks and how these patriotic national mythologies serve to produce the white national subject. An analysis of the Dominican training academy and the Latin American body is performed to demonstrate each as critical spaces producing race and nation in the context of Major League Baseball. These three spaces, the ballpark, the training academy, and the Latin American body, are explored and unmapped to understand the way Major League Baseball functions as a pedagogy of white national citizenship.
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Preface

Each season, at least three hours of my day are spent watching, or reading about, Major League Baseball. After playoffs, I only have to wait a few months before spring training starts and I can continue tracking player and team development. My interest in Major League Baseball is twofold, stemming from my position as a fan of the sport and from my academic background in anti-colonialism and Caribbean Studies. My academic interests have always focused on the way the Caribbean is consumed, and during my final undergraduate years I started taking a critical approach to the way Major League Baseball consumes the Caribbean. Here, I am in agreement with Mimi Sheller, who notes, “the Caribbean has been repeatedly imagined and narrated as a tropical paradise in which the lands, plants, resources, bodies, and cultures of its inhabitants are open to be invaded, occupied, bought, moved, used, viewed, and consumed in various ways” (13). Since my undergraduate work, I have paid keen attention to the landscape of Major League Baseball and the role of non-American bodies in serving and transforming the space of the stadium. I have always been interested in the utility of sport to nationalist discourse and the way sport can serve as a platform to appeal to mass audiences. Although I approach baseball with a critical lens, it somehow does not detract from my own consumption of the game. I am aware of the criticisms, contradictions, and tensions embedded within Major League Baseball, but still find myself checking scores throughout the day and tracking the careers of my favourite and not-so-favourite players. I engage in my own process of consumption prompting me to consider an important question: how are we each interpellated into the national imaginary through baseball?
I started my thesis project in the fall of 2015 at the height of the Blue Jays’ intense post-season run. It was interesting, and informative, to see the nation rally behind a single team and how this has consequently reinvigorated spectatorship and appeal for the game. Especially interesting is the transformation of Toronto’s team into a national team, thus a representation of the Canadian nation. While my thesis is developed around baseball in the American nation, it was insightful seeing baseball reproduce Canadian nationalism in such a condensed, yet explosive, manner. My fascination with the emergence of Blue Jays fervor in Toronto, and across Canada, is partly due to the fact that although I am a fan of the sport, I cannot seem to pledge allegiance to a team defined by its locality, or nationality. As a racialized Canadian woman of Caribbean descent, I cannot ignore the white-settler nation I operate within, and certainly cannot separate professional baseball from its role within the white-settler landscape. A white-settler society is premised on, and structured by, racial hierarchies and is established by Europeans on non-European soil (Raza 1). Baseball and ballparks are potent in the North American imaginary, recalling national experience and citizenship. That being said, professional baseball is increasingly dominated by non-American bodies, a presence that ostensibly contradicts the uniquely American narrative perpetuated by national mythology and narratives.

While baseball is known as the American national pastime, and is reflective of popular American ideologies, it is important to note that baseball is not exclusively an American game. In the Canadian context, baseball developed alongside and at times, intertwined with, its American counterpart (Hill 37). As noted by Greenham, “the boom in baseball in the United States spread northwards to Canada largely because of the powerful American influence on Canadian culture and the similarity of values and lifestyles” (36). Similar to the American context, baseball was the sport taken up by soldiers, “in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, baseball was the game of import in Canada – not the British game of cricket nor the
Native Canadian game of lacrosse” (Greenham 36). The success of the Toronto Blue Jays from 1983 to 1993 is a source of immense pride for many Canadians and a triumphant marker in Canadian sporting history. Spectator attendance at the SkyDome broke Major League records from 1991 to 1993 (Hill 53). The recent success of the Toronto Blue Jays recalls this fervent drumming of Canadian national pride and perhaps speaks to a desire to show Canadian success in an American dominated sport. After 22 years, the Blue Jays made it to the playoffs and won the American League East division championship in September 2015. The mass following and uproar over the Jays’ success not only reflected the playoff drought, but also the general lack of sporting success in the city. There are, perhaps, Canadian mythologies perpetuated by, and through, our desire to dominate the American national pastime. It is beyond the scope of this paper to contextualize the Canadian contours of each American narrative presented. However, this thesis project was undertaken from a Canadian perspective, and, I believe it is important to consider the dynamics of the North American landscape when exploring how the American nation is produced through professional baseball. It is also important to note that baseball is a global game, played beyond North America, South America, and the Caribbean. This thesis project is scoped to consider the landscape of Major League Baseball (MLB) in North America, inclusive of franchise training academies in the Caribbean and the Latin American bodies that increasingly dominate MLB rosters.

From my perspective, it is the mundane qualities of baseball that make it a space necessitating critical analysis. The commonplace and normalized atmosphere of baseball masks its productive role in the national landscape, which is precisely why it needs to be denaturalized. Baseball is the North American national sport, officially in the United States and unofficially in Canada. Dubbed the “national pastime” of America, Major League rosters are increasingly comprised of Latino and Latin American players. In 2012, players born in Latin America made
up 42% of minor league rosters, and 24% of major league rosters (Gordon). Since 1995, Major League Baseball has issued press releases with annual data on foreign-born players, consistently noting that the Dominican Republic has led in the production of baseball players outside of the United States (“Opening Day Rosters”). As a Caribbean scholar interested in race and nationalism, I am compelled to challenge and explore the productive role of non-American, non-white bodies, in a national game. The presence of Caribbean, specifically Dominican, bodies in contemporary professional baseball is undeniable and necessitates investigation inclusive of MLB spaces within North America and the Caribbean. This led me to develop the following project where I explore, and unmap, the geographies of Major League Baseball that produce the white settler nation. This project focuses on how baseball (re)produces white subjectivity through the consumption of brown bodies. As will be expanded upon, this thesis project is conducted through a spatial analysis, which is integral for thinking about the spectatorship and consumption of a national sport that formally operates in North America with an increasingly non-American player demographic. While the existing literature addresses baseball and empire in connection with Major League Baseball, as well as the farming of Dominican athletes, this thesis project innovates by linking these two areas using spatial analysis.

This thesis contributes an analysis of the way whiteness is produced and reproduced in the landscape of Major League Baseball. Many scholars have established the critical connection between race and space, and spatiality and sport (Bale; Douglas; Fusco; Rankine; Vertinsky and Bale). Adding to this body of work, this project argues that the spaces of Major League Baseball are fertile ground for the spatializing of race and the racializing of space. Baseball and spatiality operate on several levels that all work in tandem to narrate national mythology. North American cities are mapped and celebrated through their stadiums. Baseball and ballparks are often romanticized as spaces for community building, and as significantly gendered spaces where
fathers and sons can know themselves on the land. Major League Baseball is also increasingly dominated by non-American players, marking the movement of bodies across spaces. In most cases, bodies move from factory-like academies in the Dominican Republic to North American stadiums. Latin American players have a productive role in, and across, these spaces. To investigate the role of contemporary baseball and Latin American baseball players in the white national imaginary, this thesis explores and connects three critical spaces: the North American stadium, the Dominican training academy, and the Latin American and Latino body. This thesis uses the term Latino in the specific context of the US imaginary, where “the Latino body has been imagined, dismembered, and reimagined anew” and reconstituted in the national order to reaffirm an imagined community by “positing the immigrant body as a national pathogen” (Lima 9, 15). Latino and Latin American, in this thesis and in the work of Lima, are used as distinct identities, with Latino subjectivity being specific to the US national context.

In the North American imaginary, professional baseball and place cannot be separated. Teams play on their home field and the take road trips to rival teams’ stadiums. Ballparks are tourist attractions and places celebrated in tandem with their home teams. Wrigley Field, Fenway Park, and Yankee Stadium are just a few ballparks that are mapped along the white national imaginary. The second chapter of this thesis examines how whiteness is remembered, circulated and reproduced in the North American stadium. I examine the national mythologies that are produced in these spaces and how they serve to reify white American subjectivity. Through an analysis of existing scholarship and media interpretation around MLB stadiums, I denaturalize the presence of contemporary ballparks to demonstrate the way these spaces produce the white nation and white national subject. Looking at the stadium also necessitates an analysis of the bodies of difference operating within those spaces.
The third chapter of this thesis focuses on the production and consumption of Latin American bodies in Major League spaces. The spaces explored in this section shift the focus from the stadium to the Caribbean landscape and MLB training academies in the Dominican Republic. These spaces are investigated to demonstrate that the white national imaginary requires the materiality of brown bodies, specifically in the production of its pastime. This chapter also conceptualizes the Latin American body as a site necessary to the production of the nation. To argue this, I explore media interpretations of Latin American baseball players, white baseball players, and the role of media in policing the color line. Looking at the North American stadium, the Dominican training academy, and the Latin American baseball player serves to denaturalize three critical spaces in the MLB landscape that are necessary for the production of the white nation. This research design denaturalizes these spaces in order to understand how white subjectivity is (re)produced in, and through, MLB geographies.
Chapter 1:
Sport and Empire

Several scholars have explored Major League Baseball’s relationship to American identity, policy, economics, and imperialism. Elias has written extensively on the relationship between baseball, American empire and American foreign policy. His work has been particularly influential in shaping my academic interests as he succinctly captures the way baseball is connected to both internal and external American imperial operations. In “The National Pastime Trade-Off: How Baseball Sells US Foreign Policy and the American Way”, Elias traces the historical and contemporary effects of globalized baseball (2011). This text considers American empire, and MLB as empire, while outlining baseball’s connection to American nationalism. Klein’s work on baseball, Major League Baseball, and the Dominican Republic is equally influential throughout my work. In “Dominican Republic: Forging an International Industry”, Klein traces the development of baseball as an industry in the Dominican Republic from 1990 to 2002. Using a political-economy perspective, Klein shows the complex relationship between Major League Baseball and the Dominican Republic by examining the substantial influence and presence of Dominicans on and off the field.

Klein further analyzes MLB’s dependency on Dominican baseball in his article “Baseball as Underdevelopment: The Political Economy of Sport in the Dominican Republic”. Here, Klein uses dependency theory to explore the linked economies of the US and the Dominican Republic through baseball. Positioning the United States, and MLB, as the metropolis and the Dominican Republic as the satellite, Klein notes, “first, the health and success of the Metropolis requires its systematic draining of wealth from the Satellites…the Satellite experiences its greatest economic depredation or growth in direct proportion to the presence or absence of the Metropolis” (896).
Klein considers the individual, cultural and systematic transactions between the two countries and in his article “Progressive Ethnocentrism: Ideology and Understanding in the Dominican Republic”, he compares the way baseball practices and events are understood in US and Dominican contexts. Klein’s work has informed much of my research on Major League Baseball and Latin America, especially when considering the transnational reach of the sport.

Major League Baseball is a globalized sport, and the landscapes of baseball in North America have become increasingly dominated by non-American players. In “Sports Mobilities Across Borders: Postcolonial Perspectives,” Besnier analyzes transnational athletic labour. While his analysis looks at football academies in West Africa and the movement of Pacific Island rugby athletes, Besnier applies a post-colonial lens that is useful to understand Dominican athletic mobility. Looking at the movement of bodies from south to north via athletic labour informs and frames continuity of colonial relationships. Besnier’s analysis also considers the multiplicity of power relations operating through and within sports mobilities, noting that “the mobility of athletes operates within a dialectic of flow and closure, hampered by serious constraints as easily as they are enabled by emergent possibilities” (852). This speaks to the complexity of professional baseball landscapes in, and between, the United States and Latin America, particularly, the Dominican Republic. The movement of bodies from south to north continue to be shaped by coloniality, with the mobility of the white subject effectively disabling, and selectively enabling, the mobility of the non-white subject. Athletic mobility entails economics of buying and trading bodies, and this thesis will explore how racialized bodies in a transnational landscape labour to produce the American nation (852).

Silk and Andrews address the role of neoliberal transnational corporations in shaping national identity in “Beyond a Boundary: Sport, Transnational Advertising and the Reimaging of
National Culture”. Globalization is defined as a process (or set of processes) which embodies transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transaction generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and exercise of power (Silk & Andrews 180). The increasingly globalized landscape of professional baseball, invoking and capitalizing upon a nostalgic American identity, grounds the sport in its status as national pastime. Silk and Andrews demonstrate that “sport is mobilized as a major cultural signifier of a nation that can engage sensibilities, identities, and experiences” (191). In “Corporate Nationalism(s)? The Spatial Dimensions of Sporting Capital”, Silk, Andrews and Cole explore the way corporate globalizations infuse, absorb and negotiate with national identities. Of interest to this thesis is the way the authors take up corporatized nationalism. The authors address the way sports are entrenched in national identity and how this transforms with the advent of globalization and late capitalism. This speaks to the globalized and corporatized empire of Major League Baseball which operates transnationally and locally in different contexts to secure a sense of nationhood.

Steven Pope further analyzes the role of nationhood and national identity in sport by linking American sporting traditions to empire. Understanding the relationship between American imperialism and sport is imperative when considering the landscape of Major League Baseball. In “Rethinking Sport, Empire and American Exceptionalism”, Pope calls for the recognition of American Empire as central to both sports history and current sporting practices. Pope thoroughly deconstructs the general reluctance to acknowledge the existence of empire or imperial mind-set in America’s past. In establishing clear connections to American imperialism, Pope is able to identify ways in which sport has been used to politically and culturally cultivate nationalism. Pope’s work calls for a greater understanding of the entanglement between American sport and imperialism, as well as the acknowledgement of continuing imperial practice
in the contemporary globalization of sport. Historically, sport has been a fundamental part of empire, largely manipulated and propagated by elite groups and the nation-state to foster national identity; these ideas are particularly prevalent in the United States where sport “reflects positive values—hard work, democracy and the opportunity for individual achievement” (Pope 94). As reiterated by Pope, “Major League Baseball played a type of economic hardball as an imperialist neo-colonizer – a history rife with class and racial implications” (106).

Kusz’s article “From NASCAR Nation to Pat Tillman: Notes on Sport and the Politics of White Cultural Nationalism” highlights the way sport is fertile ground for reproducing white imperial hegemony. Speaking directly about the public valorization of Pat Tillman, Kusz accurately demonstrates the way nationalism is understood as colour-blind while it simultaneously revives and reproduces whiteness and masculinity (79). Pat Tillman was a professional NFL player who gave up his career to serve America in the War on Terror. Consequently, Tillman became the embodiment of the American hero. Despite the Bush administration’s ban on images of American soldiers’ caskets, Tillman’s funeral was broadcasted live on ESPN in “spectacular fashion” (84). Kusz connects the political and public glorification of Pat Tillman to the inverted attitudes toward black male athletes who are often stereotyped as greedy, over-privileged, and selfish (85). The relationship between nationalism, race, and gender is a critical link to understanding how subjectivity is constructed and negotiated in sport spaces. While Kusz briefly addresses the way masculinity is produced and reproduced through the negation of black bodies, it is useful to consider his work in the context of Major League Baseball, considering the strong presence of Caribbean and Latin American players.

In “Ritual in the Church of Baseball”, Butterworth deconstructs the way patriotism is performed through the narratives, traditions and interactions within professional baseball.
Butterworth compares patriotic rhetoric in the stadium to religious ritual, noting the way baseball served to heal the nation after 9/11. He notes, “the articulation of ballpark tributes with post 9/11 patriotic discourses shifted the ceremonies from healing ritual to a potential exercise in ideology that could preserve a privileged interpretation of national identity” (Butterworth, “Ritual in the Church of Baseball” 37). From the national anthem to the replacement of ‘Take Me Out to the Ball Game’ with ‘God Bless America’ in the seventh inning stretch, baseball games are imbued with rituals that directly perform allegiance to the American nation. Butterworth traces the integration of patriotic rituals and tradition into professional baseball, noting that these performances became normalized after times of crisis as a method of unifying masses against an established enemy (“Ritual in the Church of Baseball 32). Thus, the proliferation of military rhetoric in professional sports such as football, basketball, hockey, and baseball, gets intertwined with national narratives. If baseball is known as the national pastime, and that pastime is directly connected to imperial endeavours and military support, what are the implications for this articulation of American nationalism?

The militarization of baseball pervades all aspects of the game, ranging from athletic ritual to spectatorship and from media representation to the affective circulation of patriotism within and outside of the stadium. Tricia Jenkins speaks to the problematic nature of sporting institutions as contemporary “large scale patriotic theatres meant to promote a sense of national unity” (247). Adopting a necessary and critical lens, Jenkins notes that when military rhetoric fuses with professional sport, “the conversation becomes about who is winning the war, rather than the legitimacy of purposefulness of the war and its serious economic and human costs (247). In a similar investigation into the connection between sport and war, Samantha King argues that there is an increasing “militarization of everyday life and simultaneously, sportification of political life” (King 527). Although King’s work focuses on the NFL’s infusion of the Bush
administration’s policies following 9/11, the sports-war nexus is very much applicable to MLB, especially considering its relationship to American politics and nationalism. King also speaks to athlete-soldier nexus, drawing interesting comparisons that show the productive role of athletic and military labour in reproducing American ideologies and identity (532). In this sense, it is important to understand the way fervent, and ritualized, patriotism can act as a barrier to critical and engaged democratic citizenship. Military rituals and traditions are not only important for securing national unity, but become especially salient during times of war when support and recruitment needs to be garnered. Jenkins also speaks about “coercive patriotism” where fans and athletes are unable to escape the normalized rituals and performance of militarized rhetoric (252). This is especially important considering the dominant notion of sport as being “fair”, even though free speech and dissent are rarely tolerated. For example, Jenkins point out the way security personnel and ushers ensure spectators stay in their respective seats during renditions of the anthem and ‘God Bless America’, as well as the way Carlos Delgado was booed by fans for openly opposing the Iraq invasion (253). As explored in the aforementioned scholarship, sport, empire and nationalism are intimately connected. Sport, and in this case, Major League Baseball, functions as a pedagogy of citizenship that can be critically examined through both a racial and spatial lens.

The existing scholarship offers insight as to how sport and empire are connected and function alongside, and in conjunction with, one another. The literature demonstrates that sport is fundamentally connected to nation, nation-building, and race. Missing from the literature on baseball, empire, and race is a critical engagement with spatiality, specifically the productive role of the geographies of the national pastime in producing the white nation. This project deepens the existing scholarship by examining the racial narratives of contemporary baseball through a spatial analytic, thereby demonstrating the way race is (re)produced in baseball spaces. Several
scholars have critically analyzed the relationship between sport, space and social relations (Bale; Friedman and van Ingen; Fusco; Kidd; Vertinsky and Bale). My research contributes to this important field by exploring the way a national sport, Major League Baseball, functions as a pedagogy of citizenship by securing the white national subject through the consumption of racialized bodies. It remains crucial to understand how national sport serves race and the production of whiteness through space and race. I look at the way narratives of imperialism, nationalism, and militarism are saturated in professional ballparks and how these patriotic national mythologies serve to produce the white national subject. I then analyze the Dominican training academy and the Latin American body as critical spaces producing race and nation in the context of Major League Baseball. These three spaces, the ballpark, the training academy, and the Latin American body, are explored and unmapped to understand the way Major League Baseball functions as a pedagogy of white national citizenship.

**Race, Space, and Baseball**

Investigating the landscape of Major League Baseball requires an understanding of space as a social product. This means questioning how places, spaces, locations and bodies have come to be where they are, and how space enables and disables the mobility of bodies. Space and place are often naturalized and thought to be neutral points for social relations. For instance, a neutral conception of space implies that all bodies are able to move in and out of spaces at their merit. A critical analysis of space challenges this notion and considers the active role of space in (re)producing social relations. The relationship between space and race can be seen in the careful mapping, conquering and arranging of land and people in white-settler nations. I have been asked, on multiple occasions, why some indigenous people choose to live in inhabitable conditions on reservations instead of assimilating into Canadian society. This question reflects
the way North American space and place is naturalized to reaffirm white national subjectivity. A spatial analysis would encourage investigation into the theft of North American land and the continuous material and symbolic erasure of Aboriginal bodies in the production of the white-settler nation. If low-income neighbourhoods are overrepresented by racialized bodies, the hegemonic opinion is that the inhabitants simply “lack the education and training needed to obtain the jobs, and thus the income, that would enable them to live in a wealthy suburb” (Razack 8). These spaces, and the bodies in these spaces, enable us to affirm our subjectivity while positioning bodies of difference as lesser than. Thus, space is a critical factor when considering and analyzing the way social relations and identities are produced.

Henri Lefebvre’s work, The Production of Space, theorizes space as a social product. The translation of his work in 1991 was central to the work of many Anglo-American geographers’ engagement with society and space (McCann 166). His theory is concerned with three spatial fields that collectively form the field of social practice: the physical, mental, and social (12). Lefebvre conceptualizes a ‘science of space’ that reveals the political, ideological and technologic apparatuses embedded in spaces (9). Importantly, Lefebvre also suggests that produced spaces, constituting of spatial codes, can be read, or decoded (16). According to Lefebvre, space is socially produced through a triad of spatial practice, representations of space and representational space (33).

Spatial practices are the everyday routines and experiences that make up a social space. According to Lefebvre, spatial practice ensures continuity and a type of cohesion that “implies a guaranteed level of competence and a specific level of performance” in social space (33). These practices include the lived experience of bodies within social spaces and their individual use of those spaces. The spatial practice of a society dialectically produces and appropriates space and
is only revealed when read or decoded (Lefebvre 38). These everyday practices and routines come to shape and organize daily life as well as structure space within a social order. To demonstrate the way spatial practice, or perceived space, functions between daily reality and urban reality, Lefebvre uses the example of a tenant living in a government housing project (38). The tenant’s daily life is shaped by the space and simultaneously, the space produces a sense of social order as the tenant comes to know themselves within, and in relation to, the space (Razack 9).

Representations of space are spaces conceived and constructed by planners, bureaucrats and architects. Conceived space is never directly lived in, and thus, always remains abstract, planned, and designed. Examples of representations of space include planning maps and architectural designs. Representational space, on the other hand, is the space in which life is directly lived “through the complex symbols and images of its inhabitants” (Lefebvre 33). Representational space is imagined space that is experienced through everyday life (McCann 172). This is often documented through the work of artists, activists, filmmakers, etc., who capture lived experiences in spaces. For example, while planners and government officials may have conceived the housing project with a certain social order in mind, daily tenants that protest conditions or that socialize on the street corner show a different reality (Razack 9). Spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space are dialectical nodes in Lefebvre’s model. Lefebvre’s work is particularly useful in this project as he theorizes space as both produced and productive. How are the geographies of Major League Baseball socially produced, how do they perpetuate social production, and for whom?

Baseball is a game tied to space and place. Thinking of professional baseball in North America recalls the names of teams, which are then associated with cities, associated with
stadiums. Stadiums have become tourist destinations and ways to map big cities across North America. A closer look reveals that the spatial aspect of professional baseball goes further than the stadium. The bodies within the stadium, employed by MLB to perform the national pastime, are from different spaces, places and regions. Curiously, the majority of non-American bodies are from a specific place, the Dominican Republic. Drawing on Lefebvre’s concept of abstract space, this thesis will demonstrate that the North American ballpark or stadium can be critically unmapped and read as a complex socio-political spatial construction. Abstract space is defined as “space represented by elite social groups as homogenous, instrumental in order to facilitate the exercise of state power and the free flow of capital” (McCann 164). Although abstract space renders its historical and political underpinnings as non-existent, it maintains an intimate connection to sanctioned history through nostalgia (Lefebvre 51). As will be explored in the third chapter of this thesis, the contemporary corporate stadium strives to invoke the romanticized American ballpark as it simultaneously denies and re-narrates the historical, political and economic hierarchies embedded in stadium spaces. Lefebvre notes that “abstract space is buttressed by non-critical knowledge, backed up by a frightening capacity for violence, and maintained by a bureaucracy which has laid hold of the gains of capitalism in the ascendant and turned them to its own profit” (52). Interestingly, as will be explored in the concluding chapter of this thesis, abstract space also makes way for “differential space”, space that, in an attempt to achieve homogeneity, actually accentuates difference (52). How does the contemporary corporate stadium, as an abstract space, mediate the debate and performance of “old school” and “new school” baseball? How does race, nation and citizenship factor in to these conversations?

Reiterating the observations of McCann, Lefebvre’s lack of racial analysis in spatial production does not negate his theories from being applied to the North American landscape; rather, analysing the role of representation in spatial production can demonstrate how racial
identities are reproduced and transformed (164). Lefebvre’s analysis speaks to the way space conceals the political use of knowledge and can produce social relations through its ability to construct identity and carry ideology (McCann 8). Lipsitz notes that the national imaginary is racially marked, “the lived experience of race has a spatial dimension, and the lived experience of space has a racial dimension” (12). As noted by Razack, “the national mythologies of white settler societies are deeply spatialized stories” and this is exemplified by the transnational reach of American imperialism and its subsequent patriotic glorification of baseball as an innocent pastime embodying national values (3). This thesis project will work alongside Lipsitz’ notion of the racialization of space and the spatialization of race by looking at how whiteness is romanticized and idealized through spaces of Major League Baseball. Looking at the stadium, the training academy, and the movement of bodies within and across nations, the lived experiences of fans and athletes constitute complex geographies that work within the spatial structure of Major League Baseball. Given its ties to American imperialism, the contemporary demographic makeup of MLB rosters, and the close relation of baseball to American identity, the geographies of the MLB are due for a critical spatial analysis. Unmapping highlights the way Major League Baseball acts as a mechanism supporting a larger socio-political racial project that upholds a white imperial identity.

This thesis project is concerned with the reproduction of the white nation and the white national subject in the geographies of Major League Baseball. Working with Goldberg’s conceptualization of the utility of racial formation, this thesis underscores that race is intertwined in the process of national identity building. Goldberg writes, “race brings together in self conception individuals who otherwise have literally nothing to do with each other…race pushes to its extreme the logic of national identification; hence the gratuitous ease with which race and patriotism seem to intersect” (Goldberg, Racist Culture 81). How do the geographies of MLB
serve to unite the nation through race and unite race through nation? Hage defines the field of whiteness as a “field of national power and governmental belonging”, noting that, “whiteness is an ever changing, composite cultural historical construct” (58). Throughout this thesis, I argue that baseball reproduces the white nation, a concept linked to Hage’s conception of the white nation fantasy: “a white national order that reciprocally valorizes the very whiteness that operates as its principle of organization, the White national will that is behind it and of which it is the expression” (67). Hage cites Lacanian psychoanalysis to explain further, “fantasy gives meaning and purpose to the subject’s life, and the meaning and purpose which makes life worth living is itself part of the fantasy” (70). I argue that Major League Baseball serves as a space for national practices that perpetuate the white nation fantasy, an ideal that is lived, experienced, and performed.

White national subjectivity is also connected to Kirby’s work on the enlightenment individual who “expresses a coherent, consistent, rational space paired with a consistent, stable, organized environment” (45). Kirby argues that the enlightenment individual, or the Cartesian subject, is connected to “a specific concept of space and the technologies invented for dealing with that space” (45). She contends that the mapping subject and the mapping of spaces work together to constitute the boundaries of space and self (46). This thesis conceptualizes the white national subject as the Cartesian subject, one who defines itself by “cataloguing others” (Kirby 47). I also view Major League Baseball’s north-south relationship with the Caribbean and South America in terms of cartography that instills and mediates “a particular kind of boundary between subject and space” (Kirby 47). Major League Baseball’s movement into the Caribbean and South America and the consequent mapping and development of training spaces and academies represents and materializes a white national subjectivity that determines and controls the movement and activity of Latin American prospects. Ironically and unfortunately, Latin
American baseball players play a productive role in reaffirming the national, rational subject, either by being rejected and pushed outward, or accepted and “assimilated, restoring the interior to homeostasis” (Kirby 45). The third chapter of this thesis explores how “raw” Dominican talent is mapped, developed and trained to facilitate the flow of worthy bodies into the North American MLB landscape. MLB franchises and professionals employed by MLB embody a white national subjectivity that is able to travel the north-south binary and recruit, train and channel Latin American bodies into North American spaces. Latin American bodies are either rejected or accepted into the national imaginary to reaffirm white subjectivity. In this sense, the white nation and national subject are thoroughly spatialized concepts that are (re)produced in Major League Baseball.

This analysis of white subjectivity as constituted through racialized bodies is also informed by Coleman’s work on whiteness and civility. Coleman works within the Canadian context to demonstrate the way national identity is naturalized through the conflation of whiteness and civility (5). The concept of civility, as it relates to white national identity, is defined by a “temporal notion of civilization as progress,” noting that “colonial era Europeans tended to believe that there was one path to civilization and social development, and that all societies could be ranked or placed on the same scale” (19). Coleman notes that the “white cultural practice” of civility is a project constantly in need of maintenance and reproduction, where the borders of civility are continuously negotiated (9). This concept of policing the borders of civility, accepting and rejecting what, and who, fits into a naturalized white national subjectivity, is especially useful when considering the way Latin American bodies are treated, spoken about, and reported on in Major League Baseball. Coleman investigates popular literature in Canada to reveal the way “national discourse attempts to shape our or discipline people’s daily and repeated performances of citizenship” (40). Similarly, I explore the way Latin American
bodies, in relation to the national pastime, are depicted in the media. The second and third
chapters of this project analyze national subjectivity and race through a critical reading of media.
Media itself is a space that produces and disseminates national narratives that inform the body
politic.

By exploring Major League Baseball through space, and race, I contend that the
geographies of the (North) American national pastime actively reproduce the white nation
through racialized bodies. The stadium, the training academy, and the Latin American baseball
player are sites that can be critically unmapped and read to reveal the way race is reproduced
through space. Professional baseball often takes a backseat in the North American sports
landscape, but it remains as an important marker of nationalism in North America. This thesis
explores the relationship between baseball and the making of the white nation, particularly, how
Latin American bodies are consumed in the process. What does it mean when the American
pastime is increasingly comprised of non-American bodies, Latin American bodies that are
otherwise treated as illegal and unwanted in the national landscape? How does the body politic
consume these bodies to understand white national subjectivity? What happens when bodies of
difference occupy, dominate, and succeed in a traditionally white space that is fundamentally
connected to the nation? My research in the following chapters of this project investigate how
baseball is connected to the white nation and how white national subjectivity, as manifested in
Major League Baseball, requires the materiality of bodies of difference.

As noted by Elias, baseball has traditionally aligned itself with notions of the “American
Dream,” American masculinity, and patriotism, and has historically been used to export the
“American way” (2512). This thesis will demonstrate that American imperial ideology is carried
through baseball to produce the nation, even as the game becomes increasingly globalized. As
noted by Jacobs, “space is a crucial component of this anxious articulation of imperial authority,” and we can see this anxiety manifested through Major League Baseball and in North American stadiums (159). Applying spatial theory and analysis to Major League Baseball reveals the way America’s national pastime is deeply rooted in a white national and imperial identity. Imperialism, defined as the extension of power and ideology outside the metropolis, materializes in spaces that embody the practices and attitudes of empire (Jacobs 16). The stadium serves as a spatial platform for the production and reproduction of this racialized sense of self. Similarly, unravelling spaces such as the Dominican training academy shows the complexities of linked, transnational spaces in professional baseball. Examining space and identity in the context of the MLB demonstrates how social relations are produced and reproduced in specific places and spaces.
Chapter 2: 
Ballparks as Landscapes of White Identity

“In the ballparks of America you can sit next to Americans and it’s the closest you will come to being let into their homes. It’s a cultural point of entry, into Budweiser, heckling, and how romance operates in the United States” (Forbes 21).

Baseball is intimately connected to the (North) American nation and often recalls romanticized notions of national identity. Playing catch, hitting the ball, the ball park, the grandstands, organ music, and chants have deep nostalgic sentiment in the American national imaginary. The affective qualities of baseball remain at the forefront even as the sport and nation have transformed alongside one another. This chapter explores the relationship between North American professional ballparks and white-settler subjectivity to demonstrate that Major League Baseball reproduces a white national imaginary that is firmly rooted in the past. Through an analysis of existing literature and media narratives, this chapter aims to read the spaces of professional baseball to reveal how the national mythologies of white subjectivity are spatialized. According to Hage, “nationalist practices cannot be conceived without an ideal nation being imagined by the nationalist” (39). By examining the dissemination and spatialization of racialized national mythologies, and the production of race in, and through, the contemporary baseball stadium, I will demonstrate that Major League Baseball is an active instrument in the production of the idealized white nation.

This chapter focuses on the circulation of national narratives in the North American baseball landscape to argue that baseball represents a “pure space” in the American national imaginary, a homogenous and redemptive space symbolizing freedom, harmony and virtue (Lipsitz 15). The first section, Baseball and National Mythology, will explore the way white
national mythology is spatialized in stadium spaces to reproduce and maintain a white space. This section analyzes existing scholarship to demonstrate that national myths are actively transmitted in stadium spaces, and that these mythologies produce race and nation. The second section, *Ballparks, Stadiums and White Identity*, will explore existing spatial analyses of stadiums alongside media representation to demonstrate that ballparks contemporarily function to produce the white nation.

**Baseball and National Mythology**

As the national pastime, baseball has historically and contemporarily worked to reflect American ideologies. According to Slotkin, “ideology is the basic system of concepts, beliefs, and values that defines a society’s way of interpreting its place in the cosmos and the meaning of its history” (5). Slotkin goes on to note that ideological meaning is expressed through narratives of mythology, “transmitted to the society through various genres of mythic expression” (5). Myths are expressions of stories that are instructive and productive in the sense that they reproduce socio-cultural relations through the inscription of values and beliefs (Butterworth, “Race in The Race” 230). Slotkin’s work on the Myth of the Frontier explores how national mythology is constructed and perpetuated through power and politics. The Frontier Myth suggests that “the conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation or displacement of Native Americans who originally inhabited it have been the means to our achievement of a national identity, a democratic polity, an ever-expanding economy, and a phenomenally dynamic and progressive civilization” (Slotkin 10). Contextualizing the American contours of frontier mythology, Slotkin highlights the centrality of regeneration through violence, beginning with the separation from Europe, temporary regression, and then redemption of spirit (12). This
mythology, transmitted and exalted by the society it serves, works to unify that society under a banner of united nationhood and empowerment.

Baseball, as transmitter of national narratives and mythologies that are fundamentally racialized, and spatialized, produces a façade of homogenous nationhood. Further, myths and mythological expressions are spatialized and work to produce and reproduce dominant and marginal spaces. In the context of North America and within the spaces of Major League Baseball, national mythologies are also fundamentally racialized to validate white-settler subjectivity. Whiteness needs to continuously “establish the illusion of its own uniformity and identity” (Hage 58). In this sense, national myths work to produce white national identity and national subjectivity. This chapter analyzes the circulation of national mythology in professional baseball spaces, mythologies that recall a redemptive American spirit alongside a militarized narrative. The circulation of national mythology in the stadium, including the glorification of the military, speaks to Slotkin’s notion of American national identity as grounded in regeneration through violence (12). The stadium, as a redemptive space for the American spirit, transmits national mythologies that continuously work to regenerate the white nation.

Several scholars have explored the relationship between baseball and American national mythologies. Ogden examines the role of mythic speech in baseball in relation to the Doubleday myth, gambling in baseball, and Jackie Robinson (74). Zeiler’s work traces Albert Spalding’s world baseball tour of 1888-1889 to larger mechanisms of national identity formation and Anglo-Saxon imperialism (“A Night at Delmonico’s” 28). Butterworth investigates the 1998 home run race between Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire to deconstruct frontier mythology and enactments of whiteness in sport (228). Von Burg & Johnson examine American exceptionalism mythology against baseball’s steroid era by investigating media narratives surrounding Mark
McGwire, who was reported as being both “saviour and pariah” (351). Through an analysis of existing scholarship around baseball, mythology, and race, I contend that national mythologies are enacted within stadium spaces to produce and reproduce the white nation. Building upon the scholarship mentioned above, this project demonstrates the way national mythologies produce race, and the way MLB spaces serve as an active site for this (re)production. My analysis focuses on the parading of Native American logos, Albert Spalding’s efforts to both nationalize and globalize baseball, and the glorification of Jackie Robinson in the MLB. These mythologies individually and collectively work together to service a sense of white national belonging. I look at these specific enactments of national mythology to reveal the way race is (re)produced within the landscape of Major League Baseball.

Baseball is intimately connected to the founding, i.e., conquering and colonizing, of the white-settler nation. Given that baseball was played by soldiers deployed across the frontier and is closely intertwined with American military history, the sport functions to (re)produce a militarized masculinity. This masculinity idealizes the Anglo-Saxon middle-class man who is a hero for his country. Baseball’s militarized hero is a reflection of the frontier hero, a figure common to white national mythology. According to Slotkin, “the frontier hero stands between the opposed worlds of savagery and civilization, acting sometimes as mediator or interpreter between races and cultures but more often as civilization’s most effective instrument against savagery – a man who knows how to think and fight like an Indian” (16). The frontier hero, the soldier, the militarized patriot, all represent masculinities glorified in and throughout Major League Baseball. These are masculinities connected to ideologies around nation-serving and nation-protecting, the policing and maintaining of the white-settler nation and subject through the disenfranchisement of bodies deemed as others.
Across the frontier, soldiers were stationed to protect railroad construction and settlements from Indigenous Americans and “baseball served as an outlet for pent-up energy and emotion while fostering company or regimental pride” (Bowman 38). Furthermore, “soldiers playing baseball also encouraged its rising popularity among civilians living on or near the cutting edge of the frontier” (Bowman 46). Embedded in the frontier, baseball historically functioned alongside the erasure of indigenous lands as the American nation was being carved and mapped. The forging of national identity, a patriotic identity to which baseball can mirror and reflect, requires the erasure of indigenous histories and the invisibility of indigenous peoples. This process of erasure is captured in the work of Bonita Lawrence, who traces the disappearance of indigenous histories and people as a necessary component of the Canadian national identity (23). Since the American nation can only exist if indigenous land and bodies are conquered, the national pastime requires the erasure of Indigenous Americans in order to recall an imagined identity. According to Blomley, “space itself is not only produced through performance, but is simultaneously a means of disciplining the performances that are possible within it” (122). Baseball, as performance, worked alongside colonizing operations, missionary work, settlements, and war to constitute an American conception of nationhood.

Major League Baseball, as national pastime, serves to unite the body politic through national mythology premised on the conquering of Indigenous Americans. In fact, two major league teams parade Indian logos that speak to this relationship. Conceptualized through Slotkin, the Cleveland Indians’ and Atlanta Braves’ logos can be understood as representations of the frontier myth, proudly boasting, embodying and playing through the domination of the Indigenous body. “The settler becomes the new and improved version of the Native, thus legitimizing and naturalizing the settler’s claims to the land” (Smith 218). Racial logos serve to divide the human from the non-human and the fictive from the real. This is historically
 intertwined with the way national myths have worked to associate indigenous societies with animality in an effort to construct social, spatial and racial hierarchies (Anderson 302). To contextualize, most other logos in the MLB are either parts of nature (Rockies), animals (Cubs, Diamondbacks, Tigers, Rays, etc.), objects (White Sox, Red Sox) or fictitious characters (Giants, Angels, etc.). There are a few teams named after regional groups of people, but their logos are not racial caricatures (Yankees, Mets, Athletics, etc.). Using and celebrating racist logos perpetuates the myth that Native Americans are non-human, that Native Americans are not real, and that Native Americans no longer exist and are firmly rooted in a romanticized past.

Racial mascots in Major League Baseball can also be conceptualized using Bergland’s notion of the spectral Indian. Bergland argues that “the logic of the modern nation requires that citizens be haunted” by spectral Native Americans, ghosts that function as both “representations of national guilt and as triumphant agents of Americanization” (4). The mascot and logo history for the Cleveland Indians and Atlanta Braves is one of haunting and their presence in contemporary Major League Baseball continues to haunt the nation. Even though both franchises are scaling back association with the racist caricatures, they remain a part of baseball’s historical nationalist legacy. The Braves franchise have used an “Indian” logo in various formats, including the infamous “screaming savage”, throughout their history, but have chosen to use the tomahawk solely since 1989 (“Really, Atlanta?”). The Cleveland Indians removed “Chief Wahoo” from helmets in 2014 and replaced them with a block letter ‘C’ (Foltin). As much as these franchises try to bury their ghosts, they will still be visible, both materially as memorabilia and symbolically as franchise history and regional identifiers. “Ghosts are the things that we try to bury, but that refuse to stay buried…they are our fears and horror, disembodied but made inescapable by their very bodilessness” (Bergland 5). This demonstrates the fragility and ambivalence of what is portrayed to be a triumphant and patriotic white national identity.
Debates around racial mascots have recently re-entered the media, notably after President Obama called out Washington’s NFL team for using the term Redskins despite offending the Native American community (Smith, “Obama Backs Effort”). Obama’s comments fit into a larger context of Native American advocacy for the removal of the name, with a federal judge ordering the removal of the team’s trademark registrations in 2015 (Hill). Mascot controversy was brought to the forefront earlier this year, when Bomani Jones, an ESPN analyst, wore a “Caucasians” T-shirt that parodied the Cleveland Indians’ logo, replacing Chief Wahoo with a blonde white man with a dollar sign behind his head instead of a feather. ESPN promptly asked Jones to cover his shirt (Spies-Gans). The immediate attempt to censor Jones’ T-shirt demonstrates the fine line between national pride and guilt. Chief Wahoo can represent a beloved national team, the Cleveland Indians, but drawing attention to the racial contours of the team’s name and imagery recalls the violent history necessary for that team, and nation, to exist.

Haunting in the American context is particularly relevant, as notions of American exceptionalism mask empire. “On the one hand, America is and always has been a colony of Europe, on the other, America is an imperial power…both of these facts are somehow shameful in the American context, since American nationhood is built on the denial of colonialism” (Bergland 13). The national pastime, with its performances, gestures, and traditions, serves as fertile ground for exalting nationalist rhetoric while simultaneously celebrating and repressing its colonial traditions. The instability of white national identity is precisely why institutions like baseball need to reaffirm the nation. Pope notes that the development of baseball was “incubated within a wider struggle against European colonialism as well as within a messianic sense of national destiny to conquer and transform the continent” (97). The relationship between Major League Baseball, American exceptionalism and empire was carefully crafted as a means of rallying the body politic behind the national flag.
Albert Spalding, 1849-1915, was a pitcher, turned manager and founder of the AG Spalding sports equipment company. Spalding was critical in branding and reproducing baseball as uniquely and essentially all-American. In the late nineteenth century, he led the Spalding World Tour, a transnational enterprise that marketed baseball across the globe. This tour coincided with the ‘closing’ of the frontier. As Slotkin notes, “this is a moment when ‘frontier’ became primarily a term of ideological rather than geographic reference” (4). Situated in the larger context of American national identity formation, the Spalding World Tour is often cited by historians as an important precedent to American acquisition of empire that would emerge ten years later, after the Spanish-American War (Zeiler, “A Night at Delmonico’s” 29). On this tour, Spalding and his entourage of baseball professionals propagated notions of American superiority, making sure to situate baseball as representative of the next great superpower (Zeiler, A Night at Delmonico’s” 32). The tour documents are filled with imperial and racist remarks as Spalding and the team encountered new nations, cultures and people; Zeiler notes this mirrors the milieu of racism in baseball and larger American society that they were living in at home (“Basepaths to Empire” 186). The Spalding World Tour fits into larger nationalist and imperialist drives of the late nineteenth century that “commonly invoked the banner of race as a conceptual rallying cry” (Goldberg, Racist Culture 79). The Spalding World Tour cemented baseball’s role as one of “the earliest US institutions to pursue globalization” (Elias 2511). Spalding achieved this by suturing baseball to “a growing US presence overseas…viewing the world as a market ripe for the infusion of American ideas, products and energy” (Pope 100). Spalding’s efforts to popularize and Americanize the sport were, of course, also embedded in the interest of his sporting goods company. This intertwined baseball with American notions of entrepreneurship, leadership, and self-made empire. Dyer notes that “enterprise is often presented as the sign of White spirit – that is, to a valuation of energy, will, discovery, science, progress, the building of nations, the
organization of labour, and especially leadership” (Coleman 12). Spalding’s tour is an early example of the way baseball served to secure Anglo-Saxon unity and sense of nation through race.

Spalding would go on to drive the Mills Commission, an official effort to prove baseball was a uniquely American sport after media claims that it was derived from an English stick and ball game (Ogden 69). Rumors were propagated claiming that Abner Doubleday, a Civil war “hero,” invented the game of baseball in Cooperstown, New York (Ogden 70). Now widely debunked, the Doubleday myth served to prove the game was inherently American and not adopted from an English game. The National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown serves as a concrete reminder of the role of myth in baseball. Ogden notes that exhibits at the Hall of Fame Museum still frame baseball as originating in America, establishing “blissful clarity” that baseball still mirrors the values propagated by Spalding (70). The values Spalding claimed to be American and linked to baseball are still reflected in the contemporary game. According to Butterworth, “baseball is built around the rugged individualist hero,” allowing the game to relate to “the individualist ideology that has long been emphasized in American culture” ("Race in The Race” 232). What better exemplifies notions of American individualism and the American Dream than the idea and act of hitting a home run? The batter stands in position at home plate, with all possibilities and opportunities just a swing away. Unlike the other major sports in North America (football, hockey, basketball), baseball glorifies the individual rather than the team. The critical competitive moments in baseball are between batter and pitcher, where the pressure to perform lies on the respective individual. Each batter steps up to home plate with his individually selected walk-up music framing and motivating his attempt to circle the bases. This glorification of the individual fits into broader notions of the American dream and American individualism, placing the onus of success on personal drive and ability.
Spalding also penned one of the first historical accounts of the national pastime: *America's National Game: Historic Facts Concerning the Beginning, Evolution, Development and Popularity of Base Ball, with Personal Reminiscences of Its Vicissitudes, Its Victories and Its Votaries*. Spalding’s book reads like a fable, “full of origin myths, heroes, and narratives of good and evil” (Ogden 69). This book allowed Spalding to frame baseball as truly American through mythic expression. Spalding’s World Tour, his push for the Mills Commission, as well as his book, “America’s National Game”, all served to align baseball with notions of individualism and America’s self-declared exceptionalism. Mirroring this myth of exceptionalism, baseball’s mythic expression represents a nation “chosen by God…as close a liturgical enactment of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant myth as the nation has” (Butterworth, “Race in The Race” 232). Baseball has been carefully crafted and branded to reflect, represent and reproduce the mythologized ideals of (North) American society. As representative of a white national fantasy, the nation-state has utilized Major League Baseball to construct unity under the banner of nationhood. From wars waged across the frontier to overseas military intervention, violence cannot be separated from imperial ideology such as Manifest Destiny. As an apparatus that has operated alongside the American military throughout history, baseball can be seen as a mechanism supporting white imperial identity. This is fostered through baseball’s historical connection to the nation and the continuous patriotic and militaristic traditions enacted on the field. Baseball is closely associated with the founding of the nation, the protection of the nation and patriotic support for the nation. Intimately connected to US political interests, baseball has played a visible role in each presidency since Taft in 1910 (Fleer 53).

Spalding’s tour documents, the Mills Commission, and novel are texts articulating local and global American identity through baseball. According to Spalding, “Base Ball is the American Game par excellence, because its playing demands Brain and Brawn, and American
manhood supplies these ingredients in quantity sufficient to spread over the entire continent” (5). These texts were produced during a time period critical to the building of American subjectivity, dissipating “the distance between the American and European continent by writing the white (Anglo Saxon) body as a signifier of European consciousness” (Da Silva 199). This alignment worked to create a uniquely American version of whiteness through nation while simultaneously marking racialized bodies as “threatening but affectable” others (Da Silva 202). Baseball was globalized alongside the formation and marketing of American subjectivity and still holds its place alongside national identity. Until the advent of racial liberalism and post-World War II democratic appeals, Major League Baseball was a visibly white national sport. Physically and visibly spatialized, Jim Crow laws ordered and managed bodies through segregated leagues until the late 1940s.

Major and Minor League Baseball implemented a colour line, known as a ‘gentleman’s agreement,’ well into the 1940s, not signing any black players to the organization (Vignola 73). The segregated structure of American baseball changed with the signing of Jackie Robinson in 1947 and this resulted in the slow desegregation of the national pastime. Wiggins argues that the method of integration, rather than integration itself, led to the dissolution of many black sports organizations, stating that “the leaders in white organized sport took a ‘one-way and selective’ approach, instead of ‘two-way and structural’ approach to integration” (Wiggins 190). This resulted in the “cherry-picking” of talent from the Negro Baseball Leagues without any intent of partnership or conversation with the leaders of those organizations (Wiggins 190). Vignola makes the point that Negro League Baseball is an example of a failed “alternate economy” due to the denial of full African American participation in the market system (71). White MLB management may have allowed the integration of African American players in the visible demographic of the national sport, but they did not afford African American management the
same opportunity. Integration in baseball is situated in post-World War II narratives of American racial liberalism. In the context of baseball, this served to unite the body politic under the now visible democratic and liberal values of the national game. Meanwhile, African American involvement in baseball has steadily declined since the 1970s (Wiggins 190). While there is much debate over why African-American participation in baseball is decreasing, perhaps it is more important to wonder why this is a concern. Is it a concern regarding capital, where Major League Baseball is interested in tapping into a larger audience? Or is it a matter related to the national imaginary? Wiggins argues the latter, “the dearth of African American players in Major League Baseball runs counter to its romanticized version of the past” (191).

In alignment with MLB’s role as producer and reproducer of national mythologies, Jackie Robinson has been cast as a symbol for MLB, and consequently, the American commitment to inclusivity. According to Slotkin, “when history is translated into myth, the complexities of social and historical experiences are simplified and compressed into the action of representative individuals or heroes” (13). Major League Baseball articulates its interpretation of history through the mythologizing of Jackie Robinson; he is presented to the public as the representative hero of a moment in time. Over the past three decades, Major League Baseball has deployed campaigns, tributes, ceremonies and exhibits to tout Jackie Robinson as a symbol of African-American involvement in the national pastime (Ogden 72). “A kind of nostalgia around Robinson is palpable, even getting a bit hysterical with Robinson’s number retired on every team in Organized Baseball, major and minor league” (Kelly, “Integrating America” 1026). The point is not to negate Robinson’s talent or accomplishments in baseball history, but to examine the way Major League Baseball uses him to create a particular narrative about the national pastime. The institutional valorization of Robinson, a mythic version of American racial liberalism, serves to portray the MLB as all-inclusive while masking the social realities of the game. As noted by
Melamed, “once the conflation of whiteness with the universal is recalibrated through the discursive matrix of liberal antiracism, race itself disappears” (8). By crafting specific narratives of African American history, Major League Baseball can mitigate actual efforts to improve African-American inclusion in the professional organization. “This will to exclude is not explained primarily either by race or ethnicity, but by the specific image of the racialized nation that the nationalist is aiming to construct” (Hage 49). Integration and the subsequent mythologizing of Jackie Robinson does not change race in the baseball stadium, because for Major League Baseball, race has always been nation.

The intense mythologizing of Jackie Robison narrates a story that leaves out many other historical aspects of race in American baseball. Narratives of race disseminated by Major League Baseball fail to take into account the significant role of Afro-Latino players before the contemporary era. In fact, dominant narratives of Major League Baseball convey Latinos as having a limited history in the American game until recently. Burgos notes that “for many familiar with the story of race and baseball, it remains incomprehensible that an individual can be black and Latino – and that their Latino identity did not automatically preclude them from segregation inside or outside the sporting world” (38). This speaks to the way race is socially constructed and ordered on a “shifting Black/White binary” in the United States, where cultural capital and wealth are often the determinants of whiteness (Rudolph 72). Latin Americans, often regarded as non-citizen despite citizen-status, have to navigate this binary. In the contemporary era of baseball, we see race functioning through nation and culture, with the divide of citizen and non-citizen applied to non-white bodies. Melamed’s notion of neoliberal multiculturalism is useful in attempting to understand this. “Neo-liberal multiculturalism seeks to manage racial contradictions on a national and international scale for US led neoliberalism” (Melamed 13). Major League Baseball and its affiliate organizations in the industry are deeply tangled in issues
of citizenship, identity, identity fraud, defection, and deportation. Major League Baseball often congratulates itself in its media for saving, aiding, and refining Latin American, specifically Dominican, players and baseball. Concepts like first world and third world are frequently used to describe the spatial relationship and dynamic of athletic mobility in baseball between North America and the Caribbean. As noted by Goldberg, these terms are acts of naming and are deeply situated in racial knowledge, where the first world “knows what is best for the Other – existentially, politically, economically, culturally” (150). Hage speaks about the relationship between sizes of imagined bodies, and this applies to the way MLB and media frames baseball in America versus the portrayal of baseball farms in the Dominican Republic (44). For instance, the industry established in the Dominican Republic by Major League Baseball, with assistance from the Dominican government, is used to perpetually farm players, providing a commodity chain of athletes to fill American rosters (Klein 954).

Hage uses the term “field of whiteness” to describe “the field of national power and governmental belonging” in Australia (57). Major League Baseball can also be conceptualized as a field of whiteness, representing fervent national power, ideals and mythologies. Baseball is performed on a field that has been known to stack players in certain positions. Notably, black players are historically overrepresented in outfield positions (Volz 48). This speaks to the spatialized and symbolic infield of whiteness. Volz’s study found that “black former players are 74 % less likely to become managers at the major league level than observationally equivalent white former players” and “former catchers and shortstops are the most likely to become coaches or managers,” positions in which black players are historically underrepresented (49). This demonstrates the modalities of belonging in Major League Baseball and further underscores the function of Jackie Robinson as a myth to mask a much different reality.
White imperial identity, as touted by Major League Baseball, is fundamentally a militarized masculine identity. To (un)map the stadium requires looking how spaces produce and reproduce social relations, or the way “subjects come to know themselves in and through space within multiple systems of domination” (Razack 17). Along with several other professional sports, baseball historically functioned as a “masculinizing” social device that reinforced traditional gender roles and the sexual division of labour (Kidd 556). I would further argue that baseball, given its relationship to the armed forces and imperial endeavours, represents a specific militarized masculinity that glorifies the white American male hero. According to Kusz, “post-9/11 White cultural nationalism is a discourse expressed through nationalist narratives, symbols, and imagery drenched in a patriotism that simultaneously revives and recirculates familiar images of White men who are at once common, yet a little different, and exceptionally heroic in leading the fight to protect the nation” (79). Jansen and Sabo speak to the extravagant mixing of sport and war metaphors in the American cultural landscape that consequently reasserts elite male power while bolstering images of “physical strength, aggressiveness, violence, hardness, emotional stoicism and competitive zeal” (8). Historically, when baseball was blatantly associated with military recruitment during the First and Second World Wars, it was seen as a sport that would prepare soldiers for battle, with batting thought to help prepare a soldier’s shooting eye, and throwing thought to help prepare for grenade tossing (Elias 2509). In an interesting spatial dichotomy, baseball represents and glorifies military heroes who wage war in spaces outside of the nation. As noted by Blomley, “violence is a critical component to the legitimation, foundation, and operation of a Western property regime,” and we can see this violence continuously represented and celebrated in ballparks as national identity (121).

Baseball is particularly valuable to politicians in times of perceived national crisis. For example, Major League Baseball played a central role in creating patriotic rhetoric and rallying
support for wars in Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11 (Fleer 57). This was done directly through MLB game-day rituals or indirectly through military presence at games that drummed up an us-versus-them narrative. Politicians and MLB executives positioned baseball as a device for citizens to fight terrorism at home by securing the nation and national fantasy through patriotic unity. The baseball season was halted immediately following the 9/11 attacks but proceeded as a symbolic gesture of American resilience and strength. Former baseball commissioner Bud Selig and politicians such as Rudy Giuliani and then President George W. Bush positioned baseball as a ‘shelter during the storm’ and as a place of healing after 9/11 (Elias 2514). George W. Bush’s relationship to baseball, especially post 9/11, was later repackaged in the media as a selling point during his re-election campaign (Elias 2515). Baseball was also used to heal the nation from its own afflictions after the Abu Ghraib scandal and the realization that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction. It was during this time the former Secretary of State Colin Powell harnessed the importance of baseball in unifying the population by bidding for the Montreal Expos to move to Washington in 2005 (Fleer 54). Major League Baseball is thus intimately tied to the American political landscape and salutes this relationship through patriotic and rituals and traditions. These include the singing of the anthem, the singing of God Bless America in the seventh inning stretch, an overt military presence, military dedications and ceremonies, flag decorations, jet fly-overs, and other expressions of patriotic love (see figure 1; figure 2).
Fig 1. Opening Celebrations at Fenway. Source: Andrew Malone, 23 October 2013.

Fig 2. Flags and Flyovers at Citi Field. Source: Chris Swann, 16 July 2013.
Several baseball franchises display their support for the military through Memorial Day and with celebrations and tributes during Sunday games. This includes the Toronto Blue Jays’ tradition of commemorating the Canadian Armed Forces during Sunday home games. The MLB also sponsors player visits to war zones, an imperial tradition it has upheld since the First World War (Elias 2516). Major League Baseball, as a socio-cultural institution, is imbued with imperial ideology that cannot be separated from its space in popular culture. As noted by Jenkins, “athletic institutions have become forums for a type of large scale patriotic theatre meant to promote a sense of national unity,” and baseball certainly provides a fertile landscape for nationalist performances (247). The national imaginary and mythologies of American exceptionalism are projected onto the baseball diamond in spectacular fashion. The Star Spangled Banner, Take Me Out to the Ball Game, God Bless America, military salutations, military memorials, jet fly-overs and gigantic flags are only a few examples of patriotic expression in the baseball stadium. After 9/11, God Bless America replaced Take Me Out to the Ball Game during the seventh inning stretch in an effort to comfort and support the American nation during a time of crisis (Jenkins 248). To this day, God Bless America remains a seventh inning stretch tradition for many teams.

Aside from blatantly displaying military propaganda and pageantry, baseball also symbolically enacts and glorifies military performances. For instance, batters and pitchers are often spoken about as artillery. Elias notes that power hitters like Babe Ruth transformed baseball in the 1920s, mirroring the heavy artillery that won World War 1 (2513). Continuing to reflect militarism and warfare in the contemporary game, baseball is now centered around sabermetrics and the strategic physical and mental management of players, notably pitchers, on and off the field. “Sabermetrics, a term derived by combining the acronym for the Society for American Baseball Research, SABR, with the term for measurement, is defined as the
mathematical and statistical analysis of baseball records” (Puerzer 38). Power hitters, power pitchers, strikeouts, air strikes, drone strikes; the longstanding relationship between baseball and the military is one that runs deep and transforms alongside the nation’s methods of warfare. Each franchise pays homage to their respective armed forces in varying degrees. While all teams wear camouflage gear with flag patches during Memorial Day, certain teams like the Washington Nationals and San Diego Padres have closer partnerships with their local military communities (Elias 2519). San Diego and Washington are highly patriotic localities, with San Diego home to several military bases and Washington being the capital of the nation. The Padres wear full camouflage uniforms at every Sunday home game, on Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day. Jansen and Sabo note the way the language and physical embodiment of sports/war metaphors serve to represent hegemonic masculinity as “desirable and essential to the social order” while simultaneously “marginalizing other types of masculinities within the culture (10). The entanglement of baseball with warfare produces a space that naturalizes spectator celebration of the military, thus uniting the body politic under a militant and militarized patriotism.

In this sense, it is clear that Major League Baseball is not an isolated cultural product, but is inextricably connected to a spatialized white imperial identity. National mythologies circulated in, and perpetuated by, Major League Baseball, produce the nation’s subjectivity. The production of racial knowledge within professional baseball spaces is tied to its role as national pastime. Looking at the contemporary corporate stadium as an abstract space will provide further insight into how the MLB fosters a landscape of nationalism that centres white imperial identity while providing a space of unhindered consumption.
Ballparks, Stadiums, and White Identity

In the American context, baseball is more than just a sport, and a ballpark is seemingly more than just a place. “It is experienced as a public trust that engenders a powerful sense of identification and identity for fans and franchise employees alike” (Trujillo and Krizek 306). Fleer notes that “In American culture, ballparks function as gathering places for "we the people," where cherished public values—the nation's moral glue—are celebrated” (52). How is identity formed in this space and what are fans identifying with? We can understand this as an affective space of aspiration where fans and spectators watch, engage and reminisce in a type of national yearning that is related to the mythologies extolled by baseball (Hage 42). “The construction of the ballpark as a homogenized space for white middle-class men was a theme repeated in the 1960s when several new ballparks were built in and around ‘suburban white refuges’ (Butterworth, “Race in The Race” 232). “The ball park was a ‘haven in a heartless world’ for white lower-middle class men, and the community and solidarity they found there, however based on exclusion, facilitated their accommodation to their positions in class society” (Kimmel 64). Thus, baseball as a sanctuary and a field of dreams, is deeply rooted in racial and spatial production. Speaking about the film Field of Dreams, Bale correctly notes that the same story could have been told in a suburban landscape, but “the baseball park had to be in rural Iowa for the film to work on US audiences” (151). The nostalgic national imaginary conjured through Major League Baseball creates and maintains “the optimal conditions for white patriarchal global capitalism and the undermining of the minimal gains made by historically marginalized groups since the 1960s” (Kusz 79). Ballparks and stadiums are platforms for the dissemination of national rhetoric and stage the performances that recall an idealized white nation.
Ballparks and stadiums are different, yet similar, spaces that host the national pastime. Ballparks conjure an image of a small, local field in rural (North) America, possibly hosting a minor league or existing for recreational play. In this sense, ballparks recall pastoral images of America’s past. Not all ballparks are stadiums, but I would argue that all stadiums are ballparks due to the romanticized narrative of baseball. Contemporary corporate stadiums are built to reflect and channel ballpark and baseball nostalgia. For example, during the construction of Target Field, Minnesota Twins CEO Jerry Bell stressed the importance of an outdoor stadium, stating they are building the stadium “for the next generation in order to help them experience baseball the way it’s supposed to be played” (Townsend). Similarly, the construction of Orioles Park at Camden Yards was guided by a “back to the future” mantra where every design decision was guided by the principle that they “were building a ballpark, not a stadium” (Smith 114). Despite the attempts to make stadium spaces into ballparks of the past, Schultz states “the ballpark is no longer a cultural centre of the community, but instead is located in the most economically advantageous place, usually at the strategic confluence of highways and transportation systems” (139). Shultz’s work traces the geography of ballpark from rural, cozy, wooden spaces to the steel and concrete stadiums used today and concludes that baseball has lost its traditional hold on local communities, thereby having “a fraction of the emotional hold among children that it had a generation ago” (139).

The difference between ballparks and stadiums is captured by my experience at a regular season Blue Jays game versus my experience at a spring training game. The majority of baseball games that I watch in-person are during the regular season at Rogers Centre in Toronto, a retractable-roof stadium that can seat nearly 50,000 spectators (Nicholson-Smith). Last year, I had the opportunity to watch a Blue Jays spring training game at the Florida Auto Exchange Stadium in Dunedin, Florida (see figure 1). Although officially called a ‘stadium’, the Dunedin
ballpark is dramatically different from Rogers Centre, completely outdoors, intimate, seating around 5,000 fans. The same game is played on both fields, in both stadiums, but the space and the environment fostered is entirely different. At the Rogers Centre, you are a spectator and depending on your seats, often rely on the TV and digital scoreboard to keep track of what is happening. At the Auto Exchange Stadium, I could see every play and felt involved in the game. Regardless of the space, and whether or not it fosters the same sense of community, the game played on the diamond is the thread that unites the body politic. As summarized by the architect Janet Smith, “no matter the place, there are ninety feet between the baselines and sixty feet and sixty inches from home plate to the mound” (118).

Fig 3. Jays vs. Orioles in Dunedin, FL. Source: Tiffany Gurprasad
Ballparks and Major League stadiums in North America are critical spaces in the national imaginary, inseparable from consumption of the game. Stadiums often carry as much nostalgic and mythical expression as the sport itself, with spaces like Yankee Stadium, Fenway Park and Wrigley Field holding potent places in the national imaginary. Major League stadiums are increasingly corporatized and reflect a capital and consumer driven market that both influences and works alongside baseball’s position as pastime. These include Rogers Centre, Tropicana Field, US Cellular Field, Progressive Field, Globe Life Park, Coors Field, Chase Field, Safeco Field, Minute Maid Park, Comerica Park, AT&T Park, PNC Park, Miller Park, Petco Park, Citizens Bank Park, Busch Stadium, Citi Field, and Target Field. The contemporary corporate stadiums that dominate the landscape of professional baseball and the American imaginary can be conceptualized through Lefebvre’s notion of abstract space. Abstract space can be defined as “space represented by elite social groups as homogenous, instrumental and ahistorical in order to facilitate the exercise of state power and the free flow of capital” (McCann 164). The contemporary corporate stadium, as an abstract space, presents a stage for bolstering glorified performances of American patriotism. Looking at themes found in the development of Washington’s Nationals Parks, New York’s Yankee Stadium, and Baltimore’s Oriole Park, it is clear to see how Major League Baseball stadiums are constructed to produce optimal profitability and unhindered consumption of the national pastime. Due to baseball’s position as the American national pastime, stadiums are often planned and designed to invoke nostalgia and patriotic fervor in relation to their respective localities. For example, Nationals Park was constructed to reflect the “democratic image” of Washington, and the stadium was built to provide a clear view of the Capitol and the city’s monuments (Friedman 334). Similarly, Oriole Park in Baltimore was designed with “high-tech” nostalgia, essentially a pastiche of baseball history monumentalized into the architecture (Friedman 128). The new Yankee Stadium also
incorporates elements from the original stadium, which was commonly known as a cathedral (Harrington 79). These three stadiums were all constructed in marginalized and underfunded areas of their cities: Nationals Park in Southeast Washington, Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, and Oriole Park in Baltimore.

Conceptualizing Major League Baseball’s corporate stadiums as abstract spaces allows for critical insight as to the way social space is produced through professional baseball in North America. In striking alignment with contemporary corporate stadiums, Lefebvre notes that “abstract space is buttressed by non-critical knowledge, backed up by a frightening capacity for violence, and maintained by a bureaucracy which has laid hold to the gains of capitalism in the ascendant and turned them into its own profit” (52). Contemporary corporate stadiums are built with an increasing amount of luxury suites, concessions, and merchandise retailers. Making space for these luxury amenities often reduces the space available for general seating, making stadiums less accessible, in most cases, inaccessible, to local residents. For instance, Nationals Park in Washington was designed as a “cathedral of consumption” with 5,600 premium seats, 78 luxury suites, and 181 points of sale which has consequently driven up the cost of admission and made the stadium into an exclusionary space (Friedman, “The Transparency of Democracy” 341).

What does it mean when corporate stadiums, platforms for American national identity through the pastime, are constructed in marginalized and peripheral city spaces? The construction of corporate stadiums in marginalized spaces works to make the histories and residents of the spaces invisible. As noted by Friedman et al., the development of Oriole Park worked to offer a “sanitized and sanctioned image of Baltimore,” a “veil of appearance” for visitors (128). This is consistent with a white imperial imaginary where impure populations are
erased for the façade of pure and homogenous spaces (Lipsitz 15). These parks were largely
developed with city funding under the claim that future revenue would eventually make its way
back into the city and ultimately be of benefit to citizens. Despite this claim, research has shown
that in the three examples mentioned above, the franchises disproportionately benefit at the
expense of local residents due to the issuance of tax exempt municipal bonds to fund the projects
(Friedman, Andrews and Silk, 129).

According to Goldberg, “the racialized image of urban squalor is taken to pollute the
picture we are supposed to have of the body politic” (“Polluting the Body Politic” 197). In this
sense, we can conceptualize redevelopment via the baseball stadium as a method of cleansing
and sanitizing the perceived pollution by centring the ballpark as a point of attraction and
redemption in the postmodern inner city. The imposition of a white national redemptive space
works to further marginalize those in the peripheries of the city. “This notion of peripheral
space is relational: it does not require the absolute displacement of persons to or outside city
limits, to the literal margins of urban space... it merely entails their circumscription in terms of
location and their limitation in terms of access” (Goldberg, “Polluting the Body Politic” 188).
The division between peripheral, racialized space and the redemptive, pure space of the ballpark
was made abundantly clear during the 2015 protests in Baltimore following the death of Freddie
Grey. Freddie Grey died after sustaining severe spinal injuries in police custody, and in the wake
of the police shootings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, communities and groups took to the
streets of Baltimore to protest police brutality and advocate for black lives (Cobb). The protest
eventually moved from City Hall to the locked gates of Camden Yards Stadium, where the
Orioles were playing the Boston Red Sox (see figure 3).
Cobb, writing for the New Yorker, notes that police presence was fairly light along the protest route but “dozens of officers in riot gear blocked the crowd from getting near the stadium, protecting commerce, and importantly, white space. The dynamic between protestors and Orioles fans quickly escalated, with one group demanding to be heard and the other wanting to consume a regularly scheduled ballgame without interruption. Fans who were already inside the stadium were in temporary lockdown and were asked “to remain in the ballpark until further notice because of an ongoing public safety issue” (Edes). When interviewed, one fan even commented that the lockdown was fine because they came to watch the game anyways (“Red Sox, Orioles Fans”). The consumption of the national pastime was thus unhindered for fans in the stadium who did not need, nor want, to engage with the concerns of the community in which the stadium had been constructed. As described by Dave Zirin of The Nation Sports,

“Camden Yards morphed from a field to a fortress. It became a stadium dividing a city between haves and have-nots: a barrier erected on the foundations of racial and economic inequality dressed in the trappings of spectacle and sport. That it was built with the tax dollars of those on both sides of the divide just makes the situation all the more dismal.”
The stadium space, in which narratives of Jackie Robinson are glorified to tout a perceived commitment to inclusivity and freedom in America, is a sanitized space for white subjectivity.

Following complaints and tension from Orioles fans about the Camden Yards protest, John Angelos, the COO of the Orioles and the son of the team’s owner, tweeted to remind fans that “people are suffering and dying” while contextualizing the situation as an economic issue for poor Americans. Although Angelos did not mention race in his statements, several media outlets framed the Camden Yards protest within a larger context of race and urban development (Zirin; Waldron; Cobb). Following the protests, Orioles Park remained closed, even as the Orioles played the Chicago White Sox to maintain their season schedule. Several media outlets published articles that reflected upon the strange atmosphere of a game being played in an empty ballpark and how this impacted the players, rather than speaking to the racial, and spatial, divide in the city (Brisbee; Crasnick; Ginsburg; Longman; Kane; “Orioles, White Sox Game”). The narrative focused on the atmosphere of the game, the ballpark, and player experience while also reiterating the event as a gesture signifying the perseverance of Baltimore in wake of tragedy. In this sense, the historical, and contemporary, political context is wiped clean for the national pastime. In turn, the game is even considered evidence that MLB stands with Baltimore and plays for Baltimore (Crasnick).

As reflected in the work of McCann, the stadium is a space “made safe for capitalism, attempting to elide and marginalize the traces of the city’s racialized geography and history” (170). Further, I would argue that Major League Baseball also selectively spatializes its geographies and histories, glorifying itself as uniquely American whilst underplaying the role of racialized bodies and peripheral spaces and nations. While ballparks and stadiums recall idealized and nostalgic notions of American homely belonging, it is imperative to consider how
this marginalizes the lived realities, and homes, of racialized bodies in urban cities. The illusion of urban renewal favours and imposes white American conceptions of home to sanitize the geography of the inner city. Home, as mythologized by the white nation as the ballpark, is physically constructed to produce the nation in areas needing purification (Goldberg, “Polluting the Body Politic” 199). Representations of contemporary corporate stadiums by city planners, architects, and franchises demonstrates the concrete imposition of an idealized order, with accompanying signs, knowledges and codes. Spectators are expected to embrace the nostalgic ambience of the ballpark, which in accordance with baseball tradition, includes national mythologies and military propaganda.

**Conclusion**

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, national mythologies perpetuated through baseball do not exist in isolation and are intrinsically connected to notions of race. In the US, fans identify with regional teams and revel in a sport that is tied to their nation. In Canada, fans support a regional team that in turn, represents the Canadian nation in a US dominated competition. “The discourse of ‘home’ is one of the most pervasive and well-known elements of nationalist practices” (Hage 39). Baseball is centered on the notion of home, figuratively and literally. “Baseball has always been framed in nostalgic terms…nostalgia is from the Greek nostos, to return home, and algia, a painful condition – thus, a painful yearning to return home” (Nathan 96). Home plate, home runs, grand slams, stealing bases, it is ultimately about the hero who is able to leave home plate, journey around the bases, and make it back safely to score a run. This resonates with Butterworth’s description of the mythic hero, one who must “undertake a series of tasks that test resolve and fortitude but ultimately leave the hero transformed” (“Race in The Race 230). Home is the yearned for fantasy that baseball shows is possible on the field and
propagates as possible through its mythological expressions of the American nation. The mythic expressions discussed in this chapter all produce an image of home and homely belonging for the white national subject. Baseball’s relationship to warfare also works to stress a patriotic need to embody and protect what is conceived as ‘home’ for the nationalist. Finally, ballparks and contemporary major league stadiums are all physical manifestations for national performances that simultaneously spatialize white national refuge from the threatening Other.

Working from this perspective, where are non-white, non-American ballplayers situated? How do we make sense of the socio-cultural contradiction where the national pastime celebrates Latin American ballplayers, but the nation and larger body politic treats Latino/a bodies as unwanted, illegal, and alien outside of the stadium? How can the national game be played when the foreign body is not completely controlled?
Chapter 3:
Consuming Bodies

The previous chapter explored the role of the ballpark in reproducing the American nation and white-settler subjectivity through the circulation and transmission of national narratives. This chapter will shift the focus onto the racialized bodies that exist, support, and perform in Major League landscapes. The spatialization of American patriotic rhetoric works through an increasingly globalized game, where 42% of baseball players are born outside of the United States, 53% of the 3,066 non-US players are from the Dominican Republic, and 24% are from Venezuela (Kelly, “Decolonizing Baseball” 829). Although I say globalized, it is important to note the unequal flow of bodies and capital from overseas into America. Critical to this inequality is the ability of the military, the MLB, and agents acting on behalf of the MLB to move across borders. The increasing amount of players in the MLB from non-US countries complicates the relationship between baseball and the white imperial national identity. In the contemporary era of baseball, we see race functioning through nation and culture, with the divide of citizen and non-citizen applied to non-white bodies. Melamed’s notion of neoliberal multiculturalism is useful in attempting to understand this. “Neo-liberal multiculturalism seeks to manage racial contradictions on a national and international scale for US led neoliberalism” (Melamed 13).

According to Hage, “if the white nation fantasy is to be perceived as possible, it requires something to explain its failure to come about…here lies the crucial function of otherness within the spatial imaginary constructed by the nationalist’s fantasy” (74). Each Major League Baseball franchise currently has an institutionalized training academy in the Dominican Republic, a country that produces more professional baseball players than any other country outside the
United States (King-White 184). Dominican-born athletes constitute nearly 30% of MLB rosters, and up to 49% of roster seats in Minor League Baseball (Klein, Dominican Baseball 5). Investigating this shift in the demographic makeup of the MLB player base reveals an extensive history of militarism, imperialism, and neoliberalism in the Dominican Republic. Consequently, this relationship has also made way for Dominican transformation of baseball into a site of empowerment and resistance to American dominance. This chapter will explore the way Latin American bodies are consumed in the making of white national subjectivity via Major League Baseball.

What occurs when Dominican bodies are the raw materials for the production of the nation, and, why is it important to analyze this? Given the increasing popularity of Major League Baseball, the influx of younger players, and the global scope and reach of the game, there is much at stake when thinking about the ordering of the social imaginary. “Sport plays a crucial role in contemporary forms of nation building by transcending social divisions and affirming political loyalties of the nation as a whole” (Jansen and Sabo 13). Moving from this perspective, it is worthwhile to explore and question the productive role of non-American and racialized bodies in the North American MLB socio-cultural landscape.

**Baseball and the Coloniality of Power**

The Caribbean and South America have historically, and contemporarily, serviced the societies of Europe and North America. The extraction and consumption of bodies, land, resources, and cultures is a thoroughly spatial and racial project that has, and continues to be, integral to modernity (Sheller 35). The Caribbean is not a static region, having undergone the historical violence of European colonialism and settlement, Indigenous dispossession, African
enslavement, and Asian indentureship. The accumulation of wealth from the Caribbean is a critical component in the history of Western capitalism and effected the move from the Mercantilist to Industrial Revolution (Benitez-Rojo 5). Colonialism in the Caribbean context can be viewed beyond the European empire, encompassing the “reworking of hierarchies of social difference and forms of labour in order to recuperate profits from their interminable tendency toward stagnation and decline” (Werner 1576). Through empires, metropolises, neoliberal polices, foreign investments, movements and migrations, the Caribbean is intimately connected to Europe and North America. American imperialism, intervention and economic-political influence in the Caribbean region also manifests dialectically and is certainly visible in Major League Baseball.

The relationship between the mobility and immobility of bodies in the Caribbean is central in thinking about socio-cultural and economic relationship between the region and the West. Dispossessed bodies, enslaved bodies, indentured bodies, impoverished bodies are connected to the employed bodies, the vacationing bodies, the touring bodies, the recruiting and scouting bodies. The flow of athletic labour in relation to Major League Baseball can be viewed in a larger context of colonialism and neocolonialism between the global north and south. Movement between the north-south binary can be understood through the term “coloniality of power,” where “capitalist accumulation is constituted through the reworking of hierarchies of racialized and gendered difference, thus redrawing the social and spatial boundaries between hyper-exploited wage work and the people and places cast out from its relations” (Werner 1574). In this sense, coloniality is necessarily spatial as it produced places “formed through specific histories of accumulation, disinvestment, violence dispossession, and resistance in relation to other places” (Werner 1576). Werner’s work investigates the reproduction of the north-south division in both the global north and global south by examining the garment export industries in
the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as well as the deeply entrenched, and spatialized, geographies of violence, dispossession, and accumulation.

Baseball in the Dominican Republic has a long history stemming from the Cuban appropriation of the sport. In efforts to resist Spanish dominance, baseball was used as a mode of cultural resistance by Cubans in the 1870s (Kelly, “Decolonizing Baseball” 825). “By 1930 Cuba had truly become baseball’s Caribbean epicentre with a long and noble past that was nearly as extensive as that of its northern neighbour…by 1900, for instance, professional baseball already existed on the island” (Regalado 13). The popularity of baseball spread throughout the Caribbean with migration and informal league tours. According to Klein, teams from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and US Negro Leagues were regularly playing against one another after 1890 (2). Baseball became an important component of Dominican culture and was often used as a method of combating American hegemony. For instance, Spagnuolo notes that one of the greatest moments in Dominican baseball history was the 1914 shutout win against the American navy, which Dominican nationalists would go on to hold as a source of pride during the 1916 American invasion (265). The first American military occupation, from 1916 to 1924 worked to entangle baseball with Dominican nationalism, a partnership that developed to make baseball an integral component of Dominican culture and national identity (Spagnuolo 265). Major League Baseball formalized a working relationship with the Dominican Republic in 1951, insisting the Dominican League change its baseball season from the summer to the winter to avoid conflict with the American schedule (Klein, Dominican Baseball 12). Training academies became official establishments in the 1980s after a long history of unregulated scouting (Klein, Dominican Baseball 13). Alongside two military occupations, the United States oversaw and supported the Trujillo regime, a Dominican dictatorship that lasted for three decades (Klein, “Yo Soy Dominicano” 919). Supporting Trujillo allowed the United States to pave the economic
conditions of the Dominican Republic in a way that would be beneficial to the United States economic interests (King-White 184). The United States also intervened and manipulated the political and economic landscape following the collapse of the Trujillo regime, initially supporting Juan Bosch and the invading and installing Joaquin Balaguer after Bosch sought economic independence (Kurlanksy 31).

Baseball, as a major industry in the Dominican Republic, cannot be separated from the infiltration of neoliberal policies in the country’s politics and economics. As noted by Regalado, baseball’s historical treatment of prospective Latin American athletes is grounded in the American tradition of exploiting Latin labour (19). American corporate interests have long shaped the landscape of the Dominican Republic, fashioning the island into a tourist destination, installing the sugar industry and sporting good factories, and have “essentially forced the inhabitants into service sector occupations that have done little to develop the country economically” (King-White 184). In fact, since the 1960s, all major private sectors of the Dominican economy have been controlled by foreign, mainly US corporations (Klein, “Yo Soy Dominicano” 920). Quoting Kuczynski and Williamson, Werner notes that, “the creation of trade zones in the Dominican Republic was celebrated during the 1980s and 1990s by proponents of neoliberal policy for diversifying exports following declines in sugar pricing and US sugar import quotas” (1578). Elias reiterates this, noting, “while the US and the MLB had long been invading Latin America and the Caribbean for decades, a rejuvenated interest was provoked by globalization’s quest for cheap labour in the 1990s” (2512). Neoliberalism, defined as the restoration of social and political power to the economic elite, created the conditions in the Dominican Republic for the MLB to develop “cheap” talent (Hallin 43). In this socio-economic climate, the allure of a major league career serves as a viable path to upward mobility. Given the lack of other opportunities and the immense success of famous baseball players, “trying to make
it in baseball has become a social norm for Dominicans” (King-White 185). Noted by Jacobson, neoliberalism works on the notion of personal responsibility, which is tied to the cultural politics of gender and sexuality (283). This is certainly the case for Dominican men who are considered failures if they do not “make it” in baseball at home and abroad (King-White 185). Major League Baseball provides a potent example of the mechanics of American empire; the American game is so closely tied to patriotism and the values of the nation while the demographic of the game increasingly reflects American neoliberalism and the global flow of capital.

**Baseballs and Bodies**

According to McIntyre and Nast, bio(necro)polis and necro(bio)polis are “designations that emphasize the geographical fluidity of accumulation and racialized difference” (1468). McIntyre and Nast build on the work of Mbembe and Foucault, describing the necropolis as “a space of negation and the socially dead, produced by expropriations and alienations in and outside European nation-states,” and the biopolis as “a form of governmentality that presumes that the sovereign subject must be conserved and shored up in order for the modern nation state to thrive” (1467). We can view the US and Major League Baseball’s historical and contemporary extraction and exploitation of Caribbean and Latin American bodies through this lens. The United States and Major League Baseball, an empire in itself, have been invading and extracting wealth and resources from Latin America and the Caribbean for decades, with a rejuvenated interest through globalization in the 1990s. “For what a top college draft would cost in the United States, approximately $500,000, one could sign 100 Dominican prospects and be reasonably assured that half a dozen would become Major Leaguers” (Klein, “Dominican Republic” 953). Aside from the industrious farming of talent, Major League Baseball also looked to the “third world” for cheap labour to manufacture its goods. Rawlings, a sports equipment
company, has supplied the MLB exclusively since 1977, succeeding the AG Spalding company (Joseph).

Rawlings produced baseballs in Haiti for decades, establishing 10 baseball factories across Port-au-Prince that exported roughly 20 million baseballs per year while taking advantage of the $1.30 minimum wage (Damu). Haiti, a non-baseball playing country, was the producer of sporting goods for the national pastime, while its neighbouring country on the same island, the Dominican Republic, produced the talent that increasingly populated the game. In this instance, Major League Baseball’s operations extracted, consumed, and laboured bodies from two nations on one island. Rawlings baseballs, historically produced in Haiti, moved manufacturing to Costa Rica after the 1986 removal of the Duvalier dictatorship (Joseph). The company was awarded a 54,000 acre free-trade zone where Rawlings imports rubber cores from Mississippi, yarn from Vermont, and leather from Tennessee (Weiner). Baseball production is not a small enterprise, roughly one hundred baseballs are expended at each major league game, in each franchise, and are rarely ever re-used (Blaskey). This does not include offseason and minor league activity. Each baseball is hand-stitched in Costa Rican factories to effectively enable the enactment of the national pastime and the production of national mythologies. It was reported that 90% of workers in the Rawlings’ factories experienced pain from the meticulous work, and a third were diagnosed with carpel tunnel syndrome (Blaskey). “The racial marking of lands and bodies continues to be a way of rendering certain bodies superfluous” (McIntyre and Nast 1471). The production of the national pastime is thus done through bodies, bodies of racialized Others who are seen as disposable. Although this relationship is often seen through, and validated as, an economic relationship, it cannot be separated from race. MacIntyre and Nast speak to this present-absence of race, a “non-existent biological substrate” that is realized through the bodies
it organizes (1473). These racial formations, therefore, play a significant role in the production of the American national pastime, and consequently, the production of the nation.

Training Academies and the Production of Athletes

Players who are born outside of the United States, Puerto Rico, and Canada are not subject to the draft system nor are they protected by the player’s union. The draft is highly formalized, regulated, and limits the number of players a franchise can sign. Guevara and Fidler note an important component of the draft system, that it is linked to educational systems, with the majority of current North American talent coming from colleges (27). In fact, when North American baseball players are drafted from high school, they are often offered scholarships by the drafting franchise for the pursuit of future education (Guevara & Fidler 27). This process stands in contrast to Latin American free agency recruitment. Free agency in the North American context often recalls enormous signing bonuses and freedom to negotiate, but the reality of recruitment in Latin America is much different. Players born outside of the countries following the draft system open up a new talent pool for franchises as they are not subject to the same hiring limitations and can often be signed for much less than American-born prospects of similar athletic ability (Kurlanksy 95). Although an official “seventeen-year-old” rule has been formalized, it is often not operational and many franchises work around the formal system (Guevara & Fidler 32). Training academies have become a critical space for the MLB, providing fresh, young talent at a much lower cost. Training academies also provide an important space in the Dominican landscape as they offer a narrow opportunity for young boys to potentially live the American dream. Speaking to the importance of the training academy space, Guevara and Fidler note that boys aged 13 to 16 are still invited to practice and play in academies to “build a sense of loyalty in a child that will make it easier for the team to sign him when he is old
enough”, and to prevent other franchises from scouting the same talent (33). By the 1970s every franchise in Major League Baseball had an academy operating in the Dominican Republic where young players could be housed, fed, and trained in preparation for potential careers in the United States (Kurlanksy 17).

It was the LA Dodgers’ academy, developed by famed scouting director Ralph Avila, that built the foundation for the MLB academy system in the Dominican landscape (Klein, “Chain Reaction” 33). By 1987, Avila developed a space that “was completely self-sufficient” and “could manage every phase of player development within its borders” (Klein, “Chain Reaction” 33). Although baseball is widespread across the Dominican, the historical development and contemporary industrious farming of baseball players is rooted in the sugar fields and towns of the country. The most famous ‘baseball town’ in the Dominican is San Pedro de Macoris, which was also the sugar centre of the Dominican Republic in the nineteenth century (Kurlanksy 38). Werner’s work on the coloniality of power is especially relevant here, considering the spatial dynamics of former sugar cane fields turned baseball academies, spaces fervent for the production of American profit and accumulation. The Towers Baseball academy, home to the Atlanta Braves franchise, was created by ex-major leaguer Salomon Torres who bought and cleared a cane field in San Pedro de Macoris (Kurlansky 156). Along with the Atlanta Braves, the Milwaukee Brewers, Detroit Tigers, LA Angels, and Toronto Blue Jays have academies in San Pedro de Macoris. Fourteen other major league teams have academies in Boca Chica, another former sugar town (Ruck 29). The remaining franchises have academies in El Toro, Villa Mella, Najayo San Cristobal, and Guerra.

Major League Baseball scouting, recruiting, and institutionalized training in the Caribbean has a long history alongside the American “exploitation of Latin American labour
dating back to the nineteenth century” (Regalado 19). Scouting practices and academies only became regulated in the 1980s after a series of scandals involving the continuous scouting and recruiting of boys well under the age of seventeen (Regalado 17). Local scouts and recruiters, commonly known as buscones, are an integral component of the Dominican baseball industry. Buscones find, train, house, feed, financially support, and often educate prospective young players (Klein, “Dominican Baseball” 69). These agents find young talent and work with them until they are able to legally try-out for MLB academies. If the prospect signs a contract, the agent usually gets a percentage of the bonus as commission (Klein, “Dominican Baseball” 71).

The term buscone is synonymous with Dominican recruiter/scout/agent and is contested as it is often portrayed negatively in North American media. According to Klein, Major League Baseball circles often talk of buscones as “pimp-like hustlers of young Dominican baseball talent”, while Dominicans think of buscones as “the discoverers and developers of talent who play an essential, positive, and increasingly powerful role” (“Dominican Baseball” 70). The MLB and corporate media often vilify local Dominican recruitment because they are unable to regulate their practices and the buscones have significant strength as a lobbying group, limiting the recruitment abilities of the MLB (Spagnuolo 285). Ironically, the buscone industry only increased in response to the proliferation of MLB training academies and the consequent undermining of Dominican amateur leagues. When training academies started appearing in the Dominican landscape, prospects could be signed at an earlier age, leaving a void in the development of amateur ball and the need to have local recruiters (Klein, “Dominican Baseball” 72). Klein demonstrates the way major League Baseball’s Dominican training academies function to “demonize” Dominicans as “inept and corrupt to justify the creation of certain MLB policies” (Dominican Baseball, 14). In response to Dominicans challenging policies and the general structure of MLB operations, the MLB and the media, often MLB owned media,
perpetuate an image of the Dominican Republic as “a banana republic” incapable of its own management (Klein, Dominican Baseball 120). In this sense, the space of the training academy is one created for the seamless flow of capital where racialized identities come to understand themselves and are in direct connection to the production of policy. Dominican recruiters, who often bear the brunt of negative media around the economy of baseball on the island, are a critical part of Dominican baseball culture because they act as local mediators between the players and the MLB. In this way, we can see how power fluctuates and is negotiated between the global and the local.

While I believe it is important to view the MLB within a larger framework of American imperialism and nationalism, it is also important not to lose sight of the fact that Dominican athletes are people looking to improve their socio-economic conditions. Unfortunately, that is not necessarily the way MLB franchises treats their talent pool; the franchises embrace a “boatload mentality” where the goal is to “hold as many players as possible” (Spagnuolo 271). The boatload mentality works at the expense of young Dominicans, the majority of which get released from teams before making it to the majors, comprising both their childhood, education, and employment. Being released from a franchise can stamp a young player with a negative reputation, making it “unlikely to get another team to sign them” (Guevara & Fidler 48). The training academy can be conceptualized within a neoliberal framework as the “overseas physical embodiment of the parent franchise”, where teams have the “infrastructure to process raw talent before exporting to the United States” (Spagnuolo 267). In fact, Regalado notes the way the formalizing of training academies has served to mask the financial discrepancies between Dominicans and their US counterparts (18). Klein notes that there are certain areas of the Dominican Republic, such as Boca Chica and San Pedro de Macoris, where baseball academies, structures, and social relations are so pervasive that they mimic the country’s free trade zones
(“Dominican Baseball” 46). This is exemplified by Kelly, who observes that “San Pedro de Macoris is a site of ramped up industrial production, a site where thousands of boys play inside barbed wire compounds…the athletes are free to leave; the barbed wire is to keep the other boys out” (“Decolonizing Baseball” 829). Therefore, academies, as extensions of their respective franchises, operate as a system for producing, and consequently commodifying, players for the North American major leagues. Looking at the flow of bodies from the Dominican Republic to North America via Major League Baseball sheds light onto the way space imprints power onto the body. Major League Baseball, situating itself as socio-economic opportunity for Dominican men, represents a space of power for those able to sign contracts. Alternatively, the body itself can be conceptualized as a site of power, where only the most talented and refined are granted opportunities.

The recruitment, training, holding, and extraction of young Dominican men, or in some cases, boys, speaks to the larger pattern of North American consumption of Caribbean land, resources, and bodies. Sheller notes that “the degree to which the body is commodified determines who can and cannot move, or in what ways their movement can be controlled” (27). Looking at the ability of the MLB in mediating citizenship demonstrates the relationship between space, place, and identity. Major League Baseball controls potential prospects in training academies by granting special visas to exceptional players and seasonal work permits to other top prospects (Kurlansky 152). In this sense, the academies operate as a residence for housing top prospects until they can legally enter the United States. Thus, citizenship is mediated through space, performance and capital as produced and reproduced by Major League Baseball. The cultural impact of the MLB in the Caribbean is also immense, with major league dreams reaching children and affecting childhood education and the structure of local youth leagues (Rosentraub 126). Tracing the way US political backing has historically supported politicians
that essentially allowed US economic control of the Dominican economy, King-White notes the way baseball, specifically Major League Baseball, in the Dominican Republic has become an integral part of male identity and a space for upward mobility (184).

Given the limited access to economic and educational opportunity on the island, athletic mobility across borders is an important mechanism for Dominican players. Importantly, this mobility/opportunity is not secured or guaranteed. Dominicans who have faltering performances, or a ‘bad’ year, in the minor leagues have to return home in the winter and await news on their visa renewal (Kelly, “Decolonizing Baseball” 830). Bresnier speaks to the precariousness of athletic mobility, noting the short life span of athletic vigour, the probability of injury, and the wavering nature of corporate interests (852). The celebrity status of many Dominican-born and Dominican-American baseball stars has led to an enchanted view of MLB’s possibilities for young Dominican men. Amongst the many Dominican baseball players to achieve Major League success are household names such as Sammy Sosa, George Bell, Felipe Alou, Jose Cano, Vladmir Guerrero, Robinson Cano, Johnny Cueto, David Ortiz, Hanley Ramirez, Starlin Castro, Melky Cabrera, Edwin Encarnacion, Jose Bautista, and Carlos Gomez, to name a few. This is the collaborative work of hegemony and the pervasiveness of the spectacle, making the extraordinary seem commonplace, real, and within reach. Celebrated multi-millionaire all-stars are hyper visible and directly reflect the way capitalism turns the body into a commodity. In fact, the global sports industry exemplifies commodification, being one of the only ‘legal’ major industries that buys, sells and trades bodies (Bresnier 852). According to Bresnier, athletic mobility represents “hope for survival, a spectacular form of participation in the production of global images of male success and the opportunity to provide for others” (851). This is a clear indication of the way gender is reproduced through the economic and cultural capital of professional sport. For example, the movement of young male athletes into Dominican baseball
cities, camps, and academes draws attention to the way households are increasingly headed by females that simultaneously labour in free trade zones (Derby and Werner 299). The movement of male athletes from town to camp, from academy to America, represents a larger performance of gender that, in turn, structures social and economic relations on the island.

The influx of non-American baseball players into North American stadiums to play the American national pastime represents an apparent contradiction in the white national imaginary. While the majority of transnational MLB players come from the Dominican Republic, a significant portion are from Venezuela and Cuba, countries to which the United States has historically established clear cultural and political opposition. Some of the most celebrated players in Major League Baseball are from the Caribbean and South America, which logically challenges the patriotic sentiment of the game. What happens when a game that fundamentally embodies American values becomes entrenched with non-American bodies? Here, we can see the apparent contradictions posed by an increasingly globalized game that still holds socio-political capital for being all-American. While many American baseball fans may not be thrilled that the game is increasingly being dominated by “foreigners”, this does not stop patriotic narrative from being circulated within the stadium and out to audiences (Kurlansky 206). Although the demographic makeup of Major League rosters may have shifted to become increasingly non-American, the players still play for, and are representative of, North American teams that glorify white national identity through stadium performances. The historical and contemporary socio-cultural contradictions are temporarily rendered irrelevant as fans cheer on their local teams. Working with Lefebvre’s notion of abstract space, the stadium can be conceptualized as a space that is wiped clean of socio-political struggle and provides a slate for the flow of capital, and, in this case, national rhetoric. Speaking to the contradictions that inevitably arise in abstract spaces, Lefebvre notes that tensions are derived from historical
contractions that “have undergone modifications…some aggravated, others blunted” (52). This reflects the way fans can simultaneously resent the number of foreign born players in the MLB, but applaud and cheer for foreign-born players whose talent advances their team’s standings. Although this appears contradictory, it is important to remember that the nation is produced through racialized bodies.

Often regarded as illegal aliens and unwanted, the general discrimination against Latino/Latina bodies in the United States reflects the way the national imaginary is also a racial and spatial imaginary (Lipsitz 10). While racialized bodies of the American public are often regulated to peripheral spaces, certain celebrities and athletes are whitened, re-racialized and normalized into the American national imaginary (King-White 181). When Dominican MLB players become famous and normalized in the sports-media landscape, they are often profiled as transcending the impoverished conditions of their country, all thanks to Major League Baseball (King-White 185). King-White demonstrates the flexible citizenship of Little-League star Danny Almonte in her work, and I would further add that the same narrative often surrounds celebrity Dominican ballplayers such as David Ortiz. The “rags to riches mythology” is commonly invoked by MLB media and Latin American players, most famously Sammy Sosa’s declaration thanking MLB for the chance to escape poverty (Guevara & Fidler 49). There is little to zero media coverage paid to the sprawling geographies and mechanisms of the MLB that make Dominican athletes economically dependent on American careers (King-White 184). Latin American bodies and minds are scouted, recruited, farmed, trained and refined for competition in the American national pastime and become commodified, turned into products for capital use-value. While it is true that all athletes in the game are trained, developed and traded based on statistics and performance, Major League Baseball’s industrious farming system in the Dominican Republic serves to commoditize the Dominican player. Transnational athletes face a
differing degree of bodily commodification in the context of continuous colonial extraction and usage. Cesaire notes that colonization equals thingification, and baseball certainly celebrates American military and colonial history (6).

**Hegemonic Masculinity and Major League Baseball**

Sport, masculinity, and race are deeply tied together, with sport historically serving to “masculinize” English middle and upper class males (Kidd 555). This allowed sport to function as a mechanism for preserving and reproducing white male identity and authority (Carrington 277). Of course, multiple masculinities operate within the realm of sport, differentiating some games as more ‘manly’ than others, with each emphasizing masculine values on varying scales (Kidd 555). For example, certain sports are considered more masculine than others because they best service the reproduction of the dominant masculinity. Connell describes hegemonic masculinity as a form of masculinity that dominates, and maintains dominance, over masculinities that are deemed subordinate (Park 369). Hegemonic masculinity, as the ideal and dominant form of masculinity in the US, is also a racialized masculinity that “requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it” (Park 372). Carrington’s concept of “the racial signification of sport” is important here, meaning that racial narratives are imbued in the sporting field that circulate in, and inform, society (280). The major sporting institutions operating in the sports-entertainment complex in North America, such as the NFL, NHL and MLB, are imbued with, and reproduce, hegemonic masculinity.

Race and masculinity interlock in the North American context to serve white national ideology. For instance, the success and talent of white athletes is often attributed to character and fortitude while the success and talent of racialized athletes is attributed to nature (Coakley 288).
Ferber notes that, “Black men have been defined as a threat throughout American history while being accepted in roles that serve and entertain White people, where they can ostensibly be controlled and made to appear nonthreatening” (12). Ferber’s work addresses the way white supremacist nations can simultaneously admire black athletes while demonizing the black body politic. She asserts that popular representations of black male athletes serve to reinforce white supremacist ideologies and inequality (16). Athletes who do not conform to hegemonic race and gender norms are vilified and made to fit into stereotypical constructions of racialized masculinities (Ferber 21). Latin American athletes in professional baseball are treated this way, often characterized by media as temperamental, emotional, and hot headed. As will be explored below, Latin American baseball players also serve a productive role in the sports landscape to reify white masculine subjectivity. Successful non-American baseball players that assimilate into the North American game are celebrated by spectators as long as they are controlled and made non-threatening to the game and national values.

The second chapter of this thesis briefly explored the propagation of militarized, masculine narratives and performances in MLB stadiums. The white national subject being exalted by Major League Baseball is a masculine subject. Butterworth notes that baseball owes much of its identity to the heroic Western frontiersmen, thereby reifying white hegemonic masculinity (“Race in The Race 232). The crisis of masculinity that emerged in the late nineteenth century in response to changing economic and social conditions was “essentially a crisis of middle-class white masculinity” being threatened by “the simultaneous erosion of traditional structural foundations, new gains for women, and the tremendous infusion of non-white immigrants into the major industrial cities” (Kimmel 57). Serving the perceived crisis of white masculinity, “one central feature of the values that were instilled by playing baseball was that they appeared on the surface to stress autonomy and aggressive independence” and
“simultaneously reinforced obedience, self-sacrifice, discipline, and a rigid hierarchy” (Kimmel 61). Hegemonic and racial masculinities are constantly policed and reproduced in MLB spaces and further propagated through sports media. When bodies of difference, commoditized bodies of difference, appear to threaten or impose on white national subjectivity, they are blasted in the media and made visible as non-American. Here, the media serves as a space that reproduces dominant constructions of race and masculinity.

**Bat Flips and Basebrawls**

While American-born, usually white, baseball players are cast as nation serving heroes, foreign-born players are portrayed in ways that reify white American exceptionalism. For example, successful Dominican players are often positioned as native informants, being asked to tell the story of how they emerged from the ‘peripheries’ to pursue the American Dream. During periods of success and fame, difference is not made an issue; it is only during moments of “shortcoming” that the media represents Latin American players through racial, cultural and national difference (King-White 181). “When an individual is successful they are represented as evidence for the unrivaled fairness of the various global and national structures they operate within” (King-White 181). In this sense, successful Latin American ballplayers in the MLB act as visible embodiments of the democratic and fair principles glorified by baseball which allegedly reflect the nation at large. The media then touts these athletes as American Dream success stories. This serves multiple purposes, namely sanitizing race relations by representing players as integrated without actually tending to issues of equality or power.

“Foreign in a domestic sense” is “a term used by the US Congress in the early 20th century to describe the American character, or lack thereof, of the inhabitants of the newly
acquired island of Puerto Rico” (Rudolph 67). “Foreign in a domestic sense” speaks to the way the media markets and packages foreign-born, specifically Latin American, MLB players. They are representative of America in the sense that American virtue afforded them the opportunity, and they are part of the domestic landscape but are inherently foreign and therefore never fully belonging. These identities are malleable, however, and operate on a shifting scale depending on the context. Regardless, Major League Baseball and the media position Latin American athletes in a manner that validates the American subject. The “policing” of bodies in Major League Baseball reproduces white national ideals on the field. The MLB propagates these ideals in its role as the national pastime and athletes become representatives of the nation. When players receive negative media, for whatever reason, they are cast in the frame of difference, be it cultural, national, or racial. These differences are policed along the lines of civility to mark the colour line, which in turn, validates the white national subject. Bodies that are made to appear different, uncivilized, wild, and tempered are contrasted to the civility and stature of those belonging to the white nation. One example, and there are many similar to this, is former pitcher and now Hall of Famer Goose Gossage’s rant about Jose Bautista's bat flip. Gossage called Bautista a “----ing disgrace to the game” and an “embarrassment to all Latin American players before him” because he tossed his bat after hitting a three-run home run in Game 5 of the 2015 American League Division Series (Marchand). Gossage’s comments were highly publicized and taken up by several sources across media outlets (Didtler; Doyle; Emert; Marchand; Montgomery; Schwartz; Zwolinski).

The policing of behavior that does not conform to the imagined ideal, or the ideal of the militarized frontier hero, is an example of the way the public manages civility in baseball. “The idea of civility as a (white) cultural practice not only made it a mode of internal management and self-definition, because it distinguished the civil from the uncivil, but it also made it a mode of
external management” (Coleman 13). This external management polices the borders of (white) civility to mark those who no longer, or refuse to, behave according to hegemonic expectations of what is acceptable in certain spaces. Aside from deeming his bat flip uncivil, Gossage also conflates Bautista with all other Latin American players before him, as if he is representative of an entire group of people. Hence, Bautista’s difference becomes a difference understood through, and because of, race. Gossage, effectively policing the borders of white civility, deems Bautista disgraceful and uncivilized, thereby behaving in a manner that does not belong in the civilized realm of baseball. Here, Gossage works to maintain baseball as a white space, with Bautista’s “disgraceful” antics marking him as a foreign body that no longer belongs in such a space. Mike Schmidt, another former Hall of Famer, also spoke out against Bautista’s bat flip, affirming the work of Gossage and further policing white civility in baseball (Kramer).

When asked about his comments in a later interview, Gossage claims he “lost his mind for a minute” and then justified his reaction by noting that he was “old school” and was taught baseball a certain way – “you control what you can control” (Marchand). Gossage also expressed frustration with the role of sabermetrics in baseball, saying that “nerds” are “ruining the game” and that players are being protected by stats and pitch counts (Marchand). According to Puerzer, pitches are counted to track the effort expended by a pitcher and the toll taken on his arm during a game (43). Gossage’s stance on biomechanics is that is it making players “less tough,” in an effort, I think, to romanticize the glory days of a white, rugged, militarized, and masculine game. Forbes exemplifies this ideal in his description of Madison Bumgarner, a 2014 MVP and World Series pitcher; “the narratives around Madison Bumgarner hinges on notions of manliness, rough-edged, and guided by a stern but fair moral code, coughing up imagined nostalgia for some gloried time of yore when men were men and women knew how to clean a fresh kill” (51). A photo-article published in the Players Tribune in 2016 captured Bumgarner’s everyday life
during the offseason. The photographs by Jed Jacobson follow Bumgarner, dressed in full camouflage, as he hunts, fishes, operates power tools, and throws axes around his North Carolina residence (“All In a Day’s Work”). The praise, fascination, and interest around Bumgarner’s lifestyle is indicative of the type of masculinity valued in professional baseball spaces. Baseball’s idealized masculinity is one connected to nostalgia that relates back to a rural white America.

The language in the Gossage article and interview is hyper-masculine, and this is not limited to Gossage’s aggressive commentary. Given that the interview and article are sourced from the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN), language and rhetoric catered to a mass hetero-masculine audience should not be surprising. The author seems to be positioning Gossage’s comments as “old school” by including alternative viewpoints from present day players and managers. Unfortunately, this works to demonstrate that “old school” mentalities and tropes are still very much embedded in the comments of players from the “new era.” Marchand quotes Bautista as taking the high road after Gossage’s outburst and saying “Today is my first game [of the spring], getting ready for a new season; hopefully, we will whoop some more ass.” Jose Fernandez, a Marlins pitcher, supports Bautista’s bat flip by saying “if you hit a homer and pimp it…that’s part of the game.” These comments work to reaffirm acceptable hegemonic masculinity by bolstering baseball with power, violence and aggression.

Along with the hyper-masculine language, there appears to be a contradiction in Gossage’s aggressive comments. On the one hand, Gossage is utterly negating the role of emotion in baseball, saying that “you control what you can control” (Marchand). On the other hand, he is negating analytics and biomechanics for controlling the body and performance of players, “they are protecting these kids” (Marchand). Regarding the latter, his concern appears to be with the implementation of rules that have been put into place to protect players, “you can’t slide into second base…You can’t take out the f---ing catcher…. you can’t pitch inside anymore”
(Marchand). By protesting these new rules, Gossage is positioning contemporary players as less masculine, less rugged and therefore not the kind of players that would thrive in “the old days.” Gossage’s comments (re)produce an ideal masculinity in a romanticized white, rural American game. The ideal player is hyper-masculine, rugged, in-control of his mind and body, a soldier in service of white national values.

In relation to this ideal, the problematized athlete is one who is not in control, controlled by external entities, incapable of containing his feelings. Here, Bautista is at fault for flipping his bat in pride after hitting a tie-breaking home run in a postseason game. To further contextualize, Bautista received a significant amount of negative media about the bat flip from various MLB media well before Gossage gave his interview (Kramer). What is critical about this dynamic is not so much Bautista as an individual in this moment, but the larger context of celebration and emotion in Dominican and Latin American baseball and how this is translated and received in the North American game. Bautista penned an article for The Player’s Tribune, a platform designed for athletes to share opinions, in which he speaks about the different, yet intertwining, cultural contexts of baseball:

The reality is that these guys came up playing baseball in an entirely different atmosphere. Come down to the Dominican Republic and experience it yourself. We’re loud. We’re emotional. We’re always singing and dancing. We love to laugh and have a good time. It’s ingrained in our DNA. And it doesn’t change when we’re playing baseball. To us, baseball isn’t a country club game. It’s our national pastime, and it comes packed with emotion” (“Are You Flipping Kidding Me?”).

While this quote, and article, warrants a thorough analysis, the point is to show how Major League Baseball rejects bodies that do not conform to a hegemonic masculinity that is necessarily racialized. The shift in baseball culture for foreign-born athletes, compounded with culture shock at-large, systemic racism, and pressure to succeed in North American societies all
work to mark the non-American body as a body of difference. In this context, Latin American athletes produce the nation and national subjectivity on multiple levels. Being “farmed” as products for use-value, athletes who do not and/or cannot conform to MLB’s militarized masculinity are punished, suspended and, if applicable, deported while reaffirming the primacy of the white nation. Bauman notes that “it is the boundary that divines, literally conjures up, the difference between the admitted and the rejected, the included and the excluded” (28). Bauman speaks of the border as begetting ambivalence and waste as “an embodiment of ambivalence...a unique blend of attraction and repulsion arousing an equally unique mixture of awe and fear” (22). This is the boundary that divides the design from its inevitable waste; the space between that polices and orders the national design. Gossage draws and affirms a boundary between Bautista and acceptable Latin American players who have been ordered and accepted in the routine of order-building (Bauman 30).

The tension around Bautista’s bat flip exploded during a game against the Texas Ranger’s on May 15, 2016. It was 7-6 for the Rangers at the top of the eighth inning when pitcher Matt Bush (intentionally) hit Jose Bautista with a fastball off the inside of the plate. Perhaps irrelevant, perhaps not, Matt Bush was released from prison and signed with the Rangers in 2015, debuting in Major League Baseball two days prior to this incident (Gilberg). Justin Smoak hit a groundball, which sent Bautista sliding into second base, and also sliding into Venezuelan-born Ranger Roughned Odor. Upset by the slide, Odor proceeded to shove and punch Bautista in the jaw. Adrian Beltre, a Dominican-born Ranger, held Bautista back during the entire incident, which cleared both team’s benches for an on-field brawl. It was widely reported and acknowledged that this incident was a direct result of Bautista’s bat flip during the ALDS Game 5 against the Texas Rangers, suggesting that Bautista had it coming (“Roughned Odor Punches Jose”; Chisholm; Holmes; Newell; Tayler). The entire game was loaded with
tension and micro-aggressive incidents preluded and followed the brawl. For instance, the Blue Jays’ first base coach was ejected in the third inning for arguing with the umpire; John Gibbons, the Blue Jays Manager, was ejected for arguing with the umpire; Odor was slid into by Blue Jay Michael Saunders in the sixth inning; and Ranger Ian Desmond, who hit a home run in the sixth inning, demonstrated a bat flip of his own (Tayler). Brawls are a common incident in the game of baseball, an acknowledged “unwritten rule” that feeds the hegemonic militarized masculinities bolstered in the game. Brawls are a method of self-policing for players, an unwritten code amongst players and teams (Elliot). What I find most interesting about this particular brawl incident, and indicative of the role of Major League Baseball in service of race and nation, is the way the crowd chanted “USA, USA, USA” when Venezuelan-born Odor punched Dominican-born Bautista. Players on both teams proceeded to fight one another, but the retaliation for Bautista’s bat flip was set in motion by Odor, a fellow racialized non-American baseball player who policed the borders of white civility to ensure Bautista stayed in line with the unwritten rules of the game. All while the crowd cheered for, and reified, the American nation.

Another incident that demonstrates the active production of white space, by white men, is Bud Norris’ comments regarding a 2015 USA Today article analyzing brawls in the MLB. The article, by Jorge Ortiz, found that 87% of bench-clearing incidents over the past five seasons were antagonized by players from “different ethnic backgrounds”. In response to this statistic, Norris is quoted as saying,

“This is America’s game. This is America’s pastime, and over the last 10-15 years, we have seen a very big world influence in this game, which we as a union and as players appreciate. We’re opening this game to everyone that can play. However, if you’re going to come into our country and make our American dollars, you need to respect a game that has been here for over a hundred years, and I think sometimes that can be misconstrued. There are some players that have antics, that have done things over the years that we don’t necessarily agree with… I understand you want to say it’s a cultural thing or an
upbringing thing. But by the time you get to the big leagues, you better have a pretty good understanding of what this league is and how long it’s been around” (Ortiz).

Norris’ comments are clearly directed towards Latin American players, as he specifically pointed out Carlos Gomez, a Dominican-born centre fielder, as being particularly offensive and disrespectful earlier in the article (Ortiz). Norris blatantly revealed the way white national subjects police civility through race in order to actively (re)produce white space. Interestingly, Norris even uses the term “we,” confidently suggesting that these sentiments are widely shared. Implying that “we,” i.e. white America, has opened the game up for everyone, suggests that it is the practice of white civility that has afforded bodies of difference their place in the sport, and thus those bodies must be grateful and act accordingly. What he calls “antics” – emotions, expressions, and gestures such as the bat flip - are not proper behaviour in America’s game.

Gomez, the centre-fielder Norris called out earlier in the article as being particularly disrespectful, is known for his energy and expression on the field. The USA today article cites him as “a main participant in four dugout-emptying episodes in the last three seasons” (Ortiz). The article also interviews Alan Klein, who has written extensively on Dominican Baseball. Klein contextualizes the colour line in the debate about “expression” in baseball, saying, “there are white guys who celebrate exuberantly…but when the guy happens to have slightly darker skin…it becomes a part of something larger. It’s not just a guy celebrating, it’s a Dominican celebrating” (Ortiz). This points to the key issue of white subjectivity policing the behaviour of racialized bodies in effort to maintain baseball as a white American space. Here, bodies of difference serve as the raw materials for white bodies to understand themselves as a nation, a civilized nation.

Norris received heavy social media backlash for his statement and has since apologized, claiming his words were misconstrued (Lin). Several media sources, such as the NY Daily News
and Fox Sports, relayed the comments and the findings of the USA today article, while others weighed in on the old-school versus new-school debate in baseball as culture clash. For instance, a CBC Sports article noted that “the norms of decorum in Latin games are much different…celebration rather than grim-faced stoicism is the norm” and that the increase in Latin American players is bound to clash with American players who are brought up with a “head down as you round the bases” ideology (Perry). Vice News and HuffPost Sports published articles that contextualized his comments in a broader conversation about race (Fernandez; Hayhurst). Importantly, both articles were attacked for bringing race into the conversation, or perhaps, bringing race into baseball. Dylan Gwinn of Newsbusters published an article accusing both USA Today and the Huffington Post of trying to cause race riots in baseball, also claiming the Norris statement was “perfectly reasonable.” Gwinn’s article suggests that fights and clashes occur because of the unwritten rules of baseball, not acknowledging that those codes and rules are entrenched in white American ethos. Hayhurst’s article for Vice Sports was also relentlessly attacked via the comments section, comments which quickly go from criticizing the merit of the article to unabridged racist bashing of Latino bodies in America.

What occurs when racialized bodies, Latin American baseball players, are negated by MLB media, MLB players, and MLB Hall of Famers? What is at stake when slightly alternative modes of participating in a national game are frowned upon? Athletes who portray an image that is not sanctioned by the MLB are cast in a frame of undesirable difference. As reflecting the values of the nation, baseball serves to manage the behavior of the bodies on the field; those bodies are in the national game and must act according to written and unwritten rules. Policing and controlling the foreign, racialized, body is especially relevant given the tension over nation, immigration, place, and belonging in North America. In one context, Latin American baseball players can be the visible embodiment of the virtues of American globalization and can act as
evidence that the American dream is still alive. On the other hand, Latin American athletes can play the role of threatening immigrant, one that corrupts the moral landscape and integrity of all that is American. According to Goldberg, “as concepts, race and nation are largely empty receptacles through and in the names of which population groups may be invented, interpreted, and imagined as communities or societies” (*Racist Culture* 79). The ambivalence of these labels further demonstrates how notions of race and nation can shift to fulfill nationalist narratives.

**Conclusion**

The Dominican baseball landscape has seen an increase in Dominican personnel in management, finance, and administration in local MLB operations (Klein, Dominican Baseball 3). Dominicans also see their mastery of the American pastime as a form of counter-hegemony, taking pride in the fact that “per capita, Dominicans are 4.3 times as likely to make it to the major leagues as Americans” (Klein, Dominican Baseball 5). Therefore, Major League Baseball is not just imposed on the Caribbean landscape, but is constantly shaped, transformed, and negotiated. Despite the hegemonic presence of Major League Baseball in the Dominican baseball landscape, Dominicans have embraced the game and transformed it into their own source of national pride and empowerment. The Latin American demographic inside and outside the North American organization is only increasing, and more and more players are spending the offseason in Caribbean Leagues.

While spaces of resistance are limited within North American stadiums and other institutionalized areas, there are moments of dissent from baseball’s affiliation with imperialism. For instance, the increasing amount of Latin American players often means an increase in Latin American fans and acknowledgement of non-US presence in the North American game. In a
more obvious move of resistance, a 2004 Toronto Blue Jays player, Carlos Delgado, openly opposed the US invasion of Iraq and the MLB’s blatant support for the war on terror. Delgado was booed and resented by fans during away games in America and was ultimately silenced after signing a contract with the New York Mets in 2006, requiring him to stand for God Bless America and abstain from further political commentary (Elias, 2518). Change in a sport dubbed the national pastime is uncertain, but the increasing movement of players towards new expressions, conversations and localities is an interesting pattern to think on.

Players entering the MLB are younger and seem to favour the entertainment value of the game rather than the national and political value. Marchand quotes MVP Bryce Harper as saying that baseball is “a tired sport…. it’s the excitement of the young guys who are coming into the game now who have flair.” Bryce Harper, National League MVP (2015), is seemingly the embodiment of the all-American militarized-masculine self. He plays for the Washington Nationals and is cited as being a “complete player” and “rare five-tool talent” (Morosi). During an interview, Harper sported a cap with the words “MAKE BASEBALL FUN AGAIN” stitched into the front. His interview subsequently launched a (social) media campaign around the sentiment and Harper soon became the spokesperson against the old school mentality embedded in baseball (Stark). His mission against old school baseball culture is not a critical intervention into the nostalgic rhetoric that links baseball to an idealized American past, but a call to connect with younger generations through more celebration, emotion, and competition on the field. I am not surprised that Harper, the MVP militarized hero, who also secured the largest corporate endorsement in baseball history, is the face of “new” baseball culture (Wagner). While Jose Bautista and other racialized athletes are seen as disrespectful and threats to the integrity of the pastime, Harper is glorified for leading the charge. This relationship between threatening Other and heroic nationalist is required to reproduce national subjectivity and the rhetoric of “home” in
baseball. The white-national, and capitalist, subject will be reaffirmed through the national pastime, whether it is through an “old school” or “new school” perspective.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis explored the production and reproduction of white subjectivity in spaces of Major League Baseball. The ballpark, the training academy, and the Latin American body are all spaces critical to MLB operation that continue to act as mechanisms for the production of racial knowledge and power. As a fan of the sport, and a woman of Caribbean descent, I cannot avoid the spaces I have unmapped in this project. I have come to understand professional baseball as a space integral to the nation, with an increasing amount of racialized and foreign bodies that both challenge and service the production of white subjectivity. I started this project at the end of the Blue Jays’ 2015 season, when they clinched their long-awaited ALDS championship title. It is now the half-way point in the 2016 season and I continue to witness the confluence of race and nationalism on the field.

The multitude of ways in which Major League Baseball deploys race and racial discourse through its history demonstrates the fluidity of the concept in producing national narratives. Major League Baseball is founded upon national mythologies that are deeply intertwined with, and mobilized by, conceptions of race. Each national myth functions to ground the national-imperial subject in his identity as American. Da Silva notes that it is the failure to conceive the cultural and the racial as productive signifiers that limits the understanding of how these signifiers govern contemporary global configuration (7). Major League Baseball acts as a transmitter of national mythologies that operate through race to constitute the modern subject and the subaltern subject. “The white subject is capable of being anti-identity or post-identity but understands his or her post-identity only in relationship to brown subjects who are hopelessly fixed within identity. Brown people provide the raw material that enables the intellectual
production of the white subject” (Smith 218). While the production and reproduction of national narratives serve an important ideological function at a macro-level, it is important to realize that these myths are performed and enacted through racialized bodies. The production of national, racial, and patriotic knowledge in the stadium is done through racial formation. The use and consumption of bodies to validate and produce the nation in Major League Baseball is both a material and symbolic process. Bodies are farmed to perform and play the game along with all of its patriotic rituals. “The degree of commodification of the body itself determines who can and cannot move, or in what ways their movement may be controlled” (Sheller 27). To a large extent, the consumption and commodification of bodies for the production of the national pastime enables American subjectivity. Those bodies are used by the MLB and media to portray specific narratives around American opportunity, immigration, and masculinity. Indigenous bodies are turned into mascots to validate and glorify the presence of the American subject, and Caribbean bodies are used and consumed to meticulously produce the goods that enable the sport.

Deconstructing race and mythology in North American professional baseball is critical to understanding its role in the sociocultural and political landscape. As Canadian and American organized baseball get ready to partner with Cuba and open contract negotiations, it is increasingly important to understand the cultural, political, and spatial significance of the sport. Studying the ideological underpinnings of this organization demonstrates the role of race in ordering and organizing bodies in a seemingly everyday part of North American culture. Major League Baseball is able to position itself as a mirror to American society, thereby declaring its commitment to equal opportunity and fair play. Looking beyond mythic speech, however, shows us that this is not the case. Representing a field of whiteness, MLB reflects a desired and romanticized white nation. That being said, culture is not one-sided, and the ever increasing exchange between North American and Latin American baseball cultures has, and will continue
to, produce change. The plethora of negative press in the aftermath of Bautista’s bat flip was accompanied by positive support from other players. There is an ongoing debate in MLB media circulating about “old school” and “new school” attitudes in the game. As explored with Bryce Harper’s campaign, concepts of race are still firmly tied to the new school narrative, thereby making it an area necessitating critical investigation.

While I briefly explored the movement of bodies into and out of North America through Major League Baseball, I propose further research into the way professional baseball is globalized, mobilized and embodied. My analysis of Latin American bodies focused mainly on the Dominican landscape. Even though the Dominican Republic produces the most professional baseball players for Major League Baseball outside of the United States, it would be insightful to analyze and compare MLB operations in other Caribbean and South American countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Major League Baseball’s globalized reach goes far beyond the Caribbean and South America, and I would be interested in exploring baseball’s relationship to the North American nation in different contexts, such as in Japan and Korea. As Friedman and van Ingen note, there is a need for spatial analysis in sport and sports culture to elaborate on the ways the body, and practices of the body, are impacted by social relations and space (87). I would also propose further research into the gendered dimensions of national production in Major League Baseball across North American and Latin American landscapes. While I addressed notions of masculinity produced through baseball, it was beyond the scope of this paper to analyze heteronormative constructions, the role of women off the field, and the absence of women on the field.

This project focused on the role of Major League Baseball, as a pedagogy of citizenship, in producing the white nation fantasy through racialized bodies. Indigenous bodies are turned
into mascots to validate and glorify the presence of the American subject, African-American bodies are absent, but mythologized to validate liberal antiracism, and Caribbean bodies are used and consumed to simultaneously produce the sport and the sporting goods that enable the game. The intent is not to deny the agency of the bodies that circulate in this space, but look at the way a hegemonic institution uses race to validate the American subject. Can a sport that has historically functioned to constitute American subjectivity enact change without losing its status as national pastime? What occurs when bodies are the raw materials for the production of the nation, and, why is it important to analyze this? Given its increasing popularity in global markets, the influx of younger domestic and foreign-born players, as well as the international scope and reach of the game, there is much at stake when thinking about the role of race, space, and nation in the landscape of Major League Baseball.
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