Faith & Reason Honors Program

SENIOR THESIS

Name
Casey Schermick

Thesis Title
Athlete Philanthropy

Thesis Sub-Title
A Review of the Moral Obligations of Professional Athletes to Give Back to Their Communities

Thesis Director
Lauren Brown, Ph.D. (Sport Management)

Year
2015
Athlete Philanthropy: A Review of the Moral Obligations for Professional Athletes to Give Back to Their Communities

Athletes are icons in today’s pop-culture. The actions of these individuals are put on display both on and off the field of competition. While many actions of athletes make headlines for the wrong reasons, numerous athletes are also involved in positive behind the scenes programs. Community outreach programs have become nearly essential for professional sport organizations. Not only have they become necessary for the organization’s own image, but also according to scholars such as Carroll (1979), these organizations have a responsibility to give back to the community.

This obligation to give back to the community is part of an organization’s Corporate Social Responsibility, which is defined as a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders (United Nations Industrial Development Organization). In other words, corporations have a moral obligation to use their extensive monetary, physical, and human resources to do charitable work in the community in which they do business.

Many professional sport organizations have developed philanthropic foundations to coincide with their CSR efforts. A few examples of these foundations include the Boston Red Sox Foundation, the Chelsea Football Club Foundation, and
the Seattle Seahawks Charitable Foundation (The Center for Global Education, 2015).

The Red Sox Foundation is the official charity of the Boston Red Sox. The mission of this program is to use the passion of the Red Sox fan base and use it to positively impact the Boston community (Boston Red Sox, 2015). The work of the foundation focuses on five cornerstone programs sponsored by the Red Sox including the Red Sox Scholars Program, Red Sox Foundation RBI Youth Baseball and Softball, Red Sox Foundation and Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base Program, the Jimmy Fund, and the Dimock Center (Boston Red Sox, 2015).

The Chelsea Foundation, sponsored by Chelsea Football Club, has a similar mission to the Red Sox Foundation. The club seeks to use the power of sport to motivate, educate, and inspire the community. The foundation seeks to improve children’s educations, while also doing other charitable projects such as environmental protection and anti-discrimination (Chelsea Football Club, 2015).

The Seattle Seahawks Charitable Foundation seeks to use its resources to improve the lives of children in the Seattle area by enhancing opportunities to participate in sport and fitness activities. The foundation partners with programs such as NFL Play 60 and NFL Youth Football Initiatives to accomplish this goal (Seattle Seahawks, 2015).

While CSR is applied to corporations, the question exists as to how individual athletes fit into the equation. According to some scholars, charity and philanthropic work are a part of the game and are therefore expected of athletes (Babiak, Mills,
Tainsky, & Juravich, 2012). However, because athletes manufacture their own brand, it can be argued that they carry the same social responsibility as corporations. This poses the question; do athletes themselves have the same moral obligation to use their personal resources to give back to their surrounding communities outside of their contractual obligations? Furthermore, it must be examined as to whether the cause that these foundations support matters.

**Review of Relevant Literature**

Businesses partake in philanthropic activities for a multitude of reasons. These range from strategic planning to increase profits, to having an altruistic perspective when making management decisions (Dennis, Bucholtz, & Butts, 2007). Businesses may use philanthropic works to improve the image of the company in an attempt to increase future profits. However, the decision to act on these actions may also be made from a moral perspective. It can be argued that from an altruistic perspective, the manager of a company has a moral responsibility to distribute the firm’s resources to promote the welfare of society, whether or not it improves profits for the company (Dennis, Bucholtz, & Butts, 2007).

This responsibility ties in directly with CSR and the decision making process of organizations. The choice to participate in philanthropic work falls under one of four domains laid out by Carroll (1979). These domains include economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (otherwise known as philanthropic) responsibilities.
Moral Obligations of Athlete Philanthropy

(Carroll, 1979). Carroll’s four domains are widely inclusive, and have been utilized in the work of many other CSR scholars (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009).

An organization serves as the economic center of the economy. Because of this, an organization has a responsibility to produce goods and services that society wants, and sell them at a profit. Carroll argues that this foundation serves as the basis for all other business decisions (1979). Businesses are also expected to follow a set of laws and guidelines set forth by society in order to help fulfill the social contract as the producer of these goods and services.

Ethical responsibilities refer to those actions that a business is expected to follow to conduct business fairly, but may not be codified in the form of laws. This is the most difficult level of CSR for businesses to follow because there is no clear-cut, definition of how to act properly. The debate of what is ethically acceptable is constantly ongoing, however according to this theory, businesses are still expected to act ethically above and beyond the letter of the law (Carroll, 1979).

Finally, businesses face discretionary responsibilities. These responsibilities may be even more complicated than ethical responsibilities because there are no set guidelines for their actions, thus explaining why this category is described as discretionary. Carroll argues that it may be incorrect to call these actions responsibilities, however, the societal expectations to do exist for businesses to go above and beyond the first four levels of responsibility. An example of these actions includes making philanthropic contributions, such as the Red Sox Foundations donations to the Jimmy Fund for cancer research. Figure 1 helps to illustrate
In this respect, professional sports organizations share the same CSR principles that any other business follows. Paul Godfrey explains this notion using W.R. Scott's three pillars of institutions theory (2009). Scott explains that institutions may be categorized as a cognitive institution, regulative institution, or
normative institution (Scott, 2008). Godfrey explains professional sport organizations CSR, by applying sport to each of these categories.

Cognitive institutions, according to Scott create a framework for how we think about and perceive different topics (2008). Godfrey explains that professional sport organizations carry out discretionary responsibilities through community relations. He explains that through this department, athletes are able to use their star status help raise awareness for issues that affect a community (Godfrey, 2009).

Sport as a regulative institution focuses its CSR efforts on the concept of fair play. This is done more so by example, rather than philanthropic duty. Godfrey uses the example of the NFL’s Rooney Rule, to help promote diversity and equal opportunity in the business world (2009). Another example of this is with the Philadelphia Eagle’s “Go Green” campaign to reduce waste and raise awareness for recycling. Because of professional sport organizations’ publicity in the media, these campaigns are able to set an example for others to follow and therefore are able to give back to the community in this way.

Finally, Godfrey explains professional sport organizations CSR efforts as though the organization is a normative institution. In this pillar, organizations act as role models to promote values such as participation and fair play as opposed to the idea of winning over everything (Godfrey, 2009). Organizations can promote this message by creating programs such as the NFL Play 60 program and the PGA Tour’s First Tee program.
To further explain professional sport organizations CSR efforts, Smith and Westerbeek provides a list of 10 ways that organizations can give back to the community based on the unique features of sport. They are as follows:

1. Rules of fair play; equality, access, diversity
2. Safety of participants and spectators
3. Independence of playing outcomes
4. Transparency of governance
5. Pathways for playing
6. Community relations policies
7. Health and activity foundations
8. Principles of environmental protection and sustainability
9. Developmental focus of participants
10. Qualified and/or accredited coaching programs

(Smith & Westerbeek, 2007)

One way that professional sport organizations carry out these programs, are through their athletes. Athletes are able to use their star-status and power to influence the mindset of fans. Because of this, athletes will often make public
appearances at program-sponsored events, community relations events, and through mass media to spread awareness of issues.

Athletes are used because they are some of the most powerful and influential individuals in today’s society. Athletes have become so powerful in fact; they actually influence how consumers make decisions (Choi & Berger, 2010). Tainsky and Babiak argue that athletes have the ability to sway consumer choices when making purchasing decisions (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011). Fans look to athletes to see the values that the athlete shares with themselves, both on and off the field. As a result of this, fans connect and identify themselves with teams and individual athletes who they believe share values that are similar to their own (Carlson & Donovan, 2013). This association directly affects their purchasing decisions. Fans establish that they are a part of an “in-group” or an “out-group” based on their associations and value connections. For example, fans that are part of an “in-group” can show that they belong to the group by wearing their favorite team’s jersey. On the other hand, they simultaneously are showing that they are part of the “out-group” of their team’s rival by not purchasing any items related to that team (Carlson & Donovan, 2013). This idea of identifying with a particular group, and disassociating oneself with another, fits into the idea of Social Identity Theory.

Hogg defines this theory as “a social psychological analysis of the role of self-conception in group membership, group processes, and intergroup relations” (Hogg, 2006). This theory presents the idea that individuals identify themselves with groups of people who possess shared attributes that distinguish themselves from
other people. Examples of these groups are social classes, families, and in the case of sports, fans of a certain team or athlete.

In the mind of the individual, the world is separate into two groups, known as “in-groups” and “out-groups” as mentioned previously. This causes the person to separate groups by association and allows the mind to refer to individuals as “we” or “us” that they are associated with, and “they” to individuals who a part of a different group (Tajfel, 1979). This allows the mind of the individual to categorize other individuals and separate those who they associate themselves with from those who they do not.

This theory plays a major role in the way sport fans identify with certain teams and athletes. As fans identify with organizations, they show their alliances in two different ways, referred to as BIRGing and CORFing (Taylor, 2002). BIRGing stands for Basking in Reflected Glory, and applies to fans that identify themselves with an in-group. These fans refer to teams as “we”, and many times will proudly wear their team’s apparel after a big win. CORFing refers to Cutting Off Reflected Failures. CORFing occurs after a loss and typically will cause fans to disassociate themselves with the team, identifying more with the out-group, referring to the team as “they”. During these times, consumption tends to decrease (Taylor, 2002).
The fan identification in sport extends beyond simply identifying with teams. Athletes have become so influential that professionals suggest that they have established their own brand, which fans identify with. Carlson and Donovan refer to these brands as *human brands* (2013). They describe a human brand as “any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts” (Carlson and Donovan, 2013, pg. 193). A few easily recognizable athletes who are human brands are LeBron James, Michael Jordan, Derek Jeter, Tom Brady and David
Beckham. These brands are shaped by the athlete and therefore, are affected by the success of the athlete, the athlete’s personal values, as well as their actions both on and off the field. All of these factors go into determining the brand’s personality; the set of human characteristics associated with the brand (Carlson & Donovan, 2013).

The brand personality takes socially recognizable human traits, such as toughness, success, charm, wholesomeness, and imagination, and applies them accordingly to the athlete (Aaker, 1997). These attributes give the athletes individuality and distinctiveness, which allows for fans to identify them. This identity leads to brand loyalty and team and athlete identification (Carlson & Donovan, 2013). Figure 3 (Carlson & Donovan, 2013) further explains this process.
To give an example to support this idea, let us assume that an athlete such as Tom Brady possesses the attributes of success, charm, and class. Fans can show that they value these characteristics by associating themselves with Brady. By this association, the fans will tend to increase their viewership of New England Patriots games, and will also increase their spending on Patriots products as well as Ugg footwear, and other brands in which Brady endorses.

Ironically, one way that athletes can build trust and improve their brand image is through the creation of a philanthropic organization (Inoue, Mahan, & Kent, 2013). When professional sport organizations make large monetary donations to philanthropic organizations, it creates a positive attitude about the team from a
fan’s perspective. This can be applied to individual athletes as well. When an athlete creates a philanthropic organization, they also improve their own human brand image. By improving their image and improving fan attitudes, the fans are able to form a stronger identification with the athlete and build more trust in the athlete’s actions (Inoue, Mahan, & Kent, 2013).

According to Tainsky and Babiak, skeptics argue that athletes may participate in philanthropic activities for the sole reason of improving their image (2011). These doubters believe that the work is being done as a way to generate more revenue for the athlete. A study done by ESPN’s Outside the Lines, it was found that many philanthropic organizations that are created by, high-profile, top-earning athletes often fell short in at least one operating standard for non-profit organizations (Lavigne, 2013). The standards for the organizations were set forth by watchdogs Charity Navigator, the Better Business Bureau, and the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. Out of 115 foundations that were surveyed, it was found that at least 74 percent did not meet the operating standards for non-profits (Lavigne, 2013). The reasons for failing included being deceptive and unethical in their fundraising efforts, being ignorant about the expenditures of the foundation, and donating minimal money to the charities they claim to support (Lavigne, 2013)

One profiled example in the study was a foundation created by Lamar Odom called Cathy’s Kids. The organization publicized that it was raising fund for cancer research. After investigating the organization however, it was found that Cathy’s
Kids had not donated a single cent to cancer research in its eight-year history (Lavigne, 2013). Rather, over 60 percent of the $2.2 million that was raised by the charity was donated to two elite AAU basketball teams. Along with this finding, Cathy’s Kids had paid its secretary and average salary of $72,000 each year, even though on its 2011 tax return, the organization reported that it was $256,000 in debt (Lavigne, 2013).

While this investigation presented staggering findings, many athlete philanthropies make great contributions to society and other non-profit organizations. As Tainsky and Babiak state however, very few athletes give money to philanthropic efforts in the community in which they play (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011). The athletes that do give money often develop their own foundations. This decision is based on their own personal morals and values (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011).

The findings of a study by Tainsky and Babiak suggest that established players are most likely to create philanthropic foundations (2011). More specifically, wealthier athletes, veteran players with an average age of 31.56 are most likely to start a foundation. A final commonality among athletes with philanthropic foundations is that the team they play for also has a charity of their own (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011).

Athletes that create individual foundations often times have a much easier time generating revenue for their beneficiaries than team-run organizations do because of their high-power, celebrity status. For example, the Tiger Woods
Foundation, Andre Agassi Foundation for Education, and the Livestrong Foundation founded by Lance Armstrong have generated over $75.6M, $82.2M, and $103.4M, respectively, in total revenue (Kim & Walker, 2013). The reason for this success however, ties in directly with fan identification, brand image, and brand personality as discussed earlier. Trust is a major factor in the decision to donate from a fan’s perspective. The stronger the connection and identification between the fan and the athlete, the more the fan trusts the athlete and their foundation, thus making them more willing to donate (Kim & Walker, 2013).

![Figure 4](image)

*Figure 4 – Influences on donor intentions. Adapted from Kim, M., & Walker, M. (2013). The Influence of Professional Athlete Philanthropy on Donation Intentions. European Sport Management Quarterly, 13 (5), 579-601.*

Figure 4 shows the willingness of fans to make monetary donations to athlete philanthropic organizations. The decrease in boldness of lines shows a change in the significance each step has in forming donation intentions. Although fans that identify themselves with an athlete may still make donations, there is a much greater potential for donations when trust is built into the fan-athlete relationship (Kim & Walker, 2013).
Examination of the Problem: Is There a Moral Obligation to Give Back

As suggested earlier, the creation of these individual foundations can serve as a dual benefit for the human brand of the athlete, as well as the brand image of the team for which they play. But the question remains, do athletes carry a moral obligation to create philanthropic organizations? After reviewing the related literature, it can be concluded that the answer to this is no. As Carroll argues, the discretionary aspect of CSR is not an obligation, but rather a choice. While this may be true, it can be argued that many athletes may feel pressured to create foundations to give back based on societal expectations. This social expectation is the foundation of the theory of CSR. Society expects athletes to follow the same four domains presented by Carroll in the same way that a business does (1979). Although philanthropy is a visible aspect of CSR, business and athletes alike are not required to participate. As stated previously, athletes can improve their brand image by establishing philanthropic foundations and using their vast resources to give back to the community, however the decision to go above and beyond their contractual obligations is made based on their individual morals and values (Tainsky & Babiak, 2011). Though there is no moral obligation to do so, many established athletes make the decision to give back to the community above and beyond their contractual obligations, and the most common way this is done is through the creation of philanthropic foundations. While there is no moral
obligation to do this, a societal expectation has developed, assuming that athletes will use their resources to give back to the community.

Wolfe argues that although an action is considered good, it is not always obligatory (Wolfe). Wolfe states that one way an act may be considered morally obligated is through a commandment. These commandments come from two sources, God and society (Wolfe). The commandment theory poses two problems in the case of philanthropy. The first is that commandments by God are not easily discernable in regards to philanthropy. Secondly, as pointed out by Carroll, philanthropy is a discretionary domain of CSR and therefore is not commanded in this regard.

Another major issue with moral obligation is that a command from society can be mistaken for what is desirable rather than what is right (Wolfe). Wolfe argues that the terms “required” and “morally obligated” are used extremely loosely in today’s society and do not actually convey the correct message. A social expectation does not qualify as a command and therefore, does not make it a moral obligation.

Although there is no moral obligation to create philanthropic foundations, many athletes are doing it, thus the issue of the cause that the foundations support must be addressed. The second part of this paper uses a quantitative study to address the question, “Does the cause that a foundation supports impact fan identification and attitudes towards non-profits?”
Hogg argues that the decision on what causes to support is an individual moral issue (2014). He poses the question, “is it moral to donate to donkeys while children starve?” The answer to this question really is, it depends. Because philanthropy is discretionary, the individual must decide whether or not to decide what issues to support based on their own morals. In this case, if an individual is passionate about animal protection, they could reason that it is morally acceptable to support animals rather than supporting food shortages.

This issue was examined further by focusing on one professional sport organization whose players form philanthropic foundations. The Philadelphia Phillies currently have several players who have created 501(c)(3) non-profit foundations. In this study, the foundations created by Cole Hamels, Ryan Howard, Jimmy Rollins, and Chase Utley, were examined. These athletes were chosen because they are local, easily recognizable athletes with formal, non-profit organizations that address different issues in the community.

The Hamels Foundation mission is “dedicated to enriching the lives of children through the power of education by giving them the tools they need to achieve their goals” (The Hamels Foundation, 2015). The organization was founded in the fall of 2008. This timing was very significant because a few weeks later, Hamels was named World Series Most Valuable Player, giving both his brand and the foundation lots of publicity.

The organization focuses its efforts on providing support for under-funded schools in the United States, as well as establishing a school in Malawi, Africa (The
Hamels Foundation, 2015). In 2014, the foundation was able to donate nearly $80,000 in grants to under-funded schools and other education programs in the Philadelphia and St. Louis areas.

In Malawi, the foundation was able to build a primary school for children in grades 1-8. This country was chosen because as the organization states, “we refuse to turn our backs on those in dire need” (The Hamels Foundation, 2015). Malawi is the fourth poorest country in the world and is stricken with disease and drought. Many children in the area would not have the opportunity to receive an education without the construction of this school.

Jimmy Rollins had worked for several years with various organizations benefiting children before founding the Rollins Family Foundation along with his wife Johari. At its inception, the foundation sought to support children in the Philadelphia area who suffered from Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. Along with this, Rollins partnered with the Prevent Child Abuse PA group.

In recent years, the couple has partnered with Farm to Families, The Food Trust, and SHARE Food Program to provide children, families, and at risk youth access to fresh foods (The Rollins Family Foundation, 2015). Rollins hopes that this effort will allow for better focus in the classroom, reduced health risks from processed foods, and reduce the amount of crime in poverty stricken communities.

In 2014, the Rollins Family Foundation was awarded the Roberto Clemente Award after raising over $1 million for the Philadelphia area (Gardner, 2014). The award is given annually to a Major League Baseball player who shows
Moral Obligations of Athlete Philanthropy

Sportsmanship, community service, and positive contributions both on and off the field (Newman, 2014).

Ryan Howard and his wife Krystie developed the Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation to promote academic and athletic development in children. Howard started this program after learning about the incredible lack of libraries in Philadelphia area elementary schools. After learning of this, the couple developed a mission to engage students in the area of literacy in order to lead them on a path to a brighter future (The Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation, 2015).

Howard's organization awarded a $75,000 academic grant to the Vare-Washington Elementary School in the Philadelphia area to build a room called 'Howard's Homeroom'. The room is baseball-themed and contains hundreds of books, comfortable reading areas, computers, and iPads to create a fun and relaxing area for students to enjoy reading and learning. The students of the school were challenged to complete Ryan's Reading Challenge, a literacy program which encouraged kids to read for at least 20 minutes a day, every day of the week (The Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation, 2015).

Chase Utley and his wife Jennifer began the Utley Foundation in 2008. The foundation focuses on working with the Pennsylvania Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to raise money for the Etana Fund, which helps to fund the Humane Law Enforcement Department. This partnership seeks to prevent the abuse and neglect of animals (The Utley Foundation, 2015).
The Utley’s have always been animal lovers and started their passionate work when they adopted their Pitbull-Terrier named Jack, who was the offspring of a dog that was rescued from one of the largest dog-fighting stings in Philadelphia history (The Utley Foundation, 2014). Since its establishment, the organization has raised over $1.3 million from their annual Utley All-Star Animals Casino Night event. Along with this event, the foundation has raised over $183,000 and has found homes for numerous homeless pets at the annual Save a Pet event at Citizens Bank Park (The Utley Foundation, 2014).

Methods

Instrument

The instrument used to collect data in this study was part of a larger study conducted by Brown, Czekanski, and Schermick examining athlete philanthropy. To address the second question in this paper, this survey examined the attitudes of fans towards the Philadelphia Phillies player foundations and the importance of each foundation’s charitable cause. Attitudes towards non-profits were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale developed by Dean (2002). Furthermore, issue importance was measured using three items adapted from Russell and Russell (2010), also using a five-point Likert type scale. To categorize respondents, three demographic items were also included. Refer to Appendix A for the complete listing of items used in this manuscript.
Data Collection and Analysis

Snowball sampling was used to collect data over two separate data collections. The survey was distributed through social media outlets, including E-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and was also delivered in-person to faculty, staff, and students at a medium-sized, private university in the northeast United States. To analyze the data from these surveys, SPSS was used to measure scale reliability and to obtain descriptive statistics. Tables 2 and 3 show the findings from this measurement.

Sample

For this study, the researchers sought sports fans in order to encompass those individuals who identify with teams and individual players. The average age of respondents was 18.53. The sample was 61.17% male (n=126) and 38.83% female (n=80). Nine individuals chose not to respond to this item. Table 1 provides a racial breakdown of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Breakdown of Respondents (n=213)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American or Black</td>
<td>n=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>n=4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian or White</td>
<td>n=189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>n=3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>n=5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Tables 2, 3, and 4, show the number of measurable responses, along with Cronbach’s alpha, and the mean of each element for the athlete’s foundation. Table 2 presents the Attitudes of fans towards non-profits, Table 3 shows a fan’s perspective of issue importance, and Table 4 shows the identification of the fan’s favorite Major League Baseball franchise.

Table 2
Attitudes Towards Non-Profits (Dean, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cole Hamels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I admire the Hamels Family Foundation</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>0.884</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the Hamels Family Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The objectives of the Hamels Family Foundation are worthwhile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hamels Family Foundation is a worth cause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ryan Howard</strong></td>
<td>207</td>
<td>0.912</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I admire the Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

**Issue Importance (Russell & Russell, 2010)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cole Hamels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe enhancing educational opportunities in an important issue</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think it is vital for the professional athletes to enhance educational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that professional athletes have a responsibility to enhance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ryan Howard</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe literacy is an important issue</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>0.737</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I think it is vital for professional athletes to improve literacy

I believe that professional athletes have a responsibility to improve literacy

**Jimmy Rollins**

I believe nutrition is an important issue

I think it is vital for professional athletes to educate families about nutrition

I believe that professional athletes have a responsibility to educate families about nutrition

**Chase Utley**

I believe animal cruelty is an important issue

I think it is vital for professional athletes to raise awareness about animal cruelty

I believe that professional athletes have a responsibility to raise awareness about animal cruelty

---

**Table 4**

*Identification of Favorite Major League Baseball Franchise*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Franchise</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not have a favorite Major League Baseball franchise</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona Diamondbacks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta Braves</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore Orioles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Red Sox</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Cubs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In examining the attitudes towards each of the non-profits, the scales were shown to be reliable, with each alpha over the acceptable level of .7 (Andrew, Pedersen, and McEvoy). It must be noted that the data collected in regards to the issue importance of the Hamels Family Foundation was not included in the analysis of issue importance. After calculating Cronbach's alpha for this data set, it was
found that the reliability was much lower than research standards, thus making the data unusable.

As shown in the results, no statement regarding attitudes towards non-profits or issue importance was below the midpoint, indicating a disagreement. Each of these statements had a mean response above the midpoint, indicating that fans believe that athlete non-profits are both respectable and that their causes are important. The four foundations discussed all received mean answers between 4.39 and 4.48, showing that fans feel strongly that athletes should use their resources to raise awareness for these issues. 52.66 percent of the respondents were fans of the Philadelphia Phillies.

**Discussion**

As mentioned earlier, the relative literature explains that athletes do not have a moral obligation to participate in philanthropic activity beyond their contractual obligations. Although they are not morally obligated, there is a societal expectation that the vast resources available to the athlete are used to improve the well being of society.

The second part to this question remains unaddressed by literature however. The matter of issue importance has not been researched extensively and therefore cannot be answered by preceding studies. This research was conducted to give exploratory insight into this issue.
As noted in the results, fans were found to have positive attitudes about athlete foundations. The average respondent believed that the charities created by Cole Hamels, Ryan Howard, Jimmy Rollins, and Chase Utley were all admirable, respectable, worthwhile, and are worthy causes. One major finding to point out is the responses to the necessity of athletes to educate the public and raise awareness for the causes that they support. The four foundations discussed all received average answers between 4.39 and 4.48, showing that fans feel strongly that athletes should use their resources to raise awareness for these issues. These non-profits have earned the respect and admiration of fans, no matter their team identification.

Identification can have a major influence on fans attitudes. Although this survey was conducted in the northeast United States, nearly 50 percent of the respondents did not identify themselves with the Philadelphia Phillies. Because these foundations still earned the respect and admiration of other fans, it can be concluded that the existence of the foundations is important. Athletes may choose to create philanthropic foundations based on this fact. As Inoue, Kent, and Mahan suggest, athletes can improve their brand image by doing this (2013). Despite the broad issues addressed in this study, fans were still supportive of the cause and respected the organizations. This positive recognition of a brand's image helps to create more trust and attract more fans to identify themselves with the athlete. As a result of this, fans become more willing to support these foundations financially,
which allows the foundation to increase their charitable efforts, thus attracting more fans, and so on.

As pointed out by Tainsky and Babiak, athletes choose to create charitable foundations based on their own morals and values (2011). As a result, the cause that these foundations support is also typically based on personal values of the athlete. This leads into the question of issue importance. Because athletes choose a cause to support based on personal values, the possibility of controversy exists. Say for instance, an athlete values pro-life very strongly. If he or she were to create a foundation that advocates pro-life, it could actually cause a negative impact on their brand image because of the controversial cause they support.

It is important to note however, that this decision has a major impact on their brand image as well. Moral choices are not mutually exclusive from good business decisions. This must be taken into account when choosing the beneficiaries of the foundation. As mentioned before, choosing a controversial cause could have a negative impact on the athlete’s brand image and could be harmful to the foundation as a whole, even if it is a morally good choice in the eyes of the athlete.

A look at the data collected as part of this research shows that fans support a variety of causes. This sample of data shows that to fans, issue is unimportant. Fans believe that athletes should be praised for doing any philanthropic work, and improving the well being of society. This shows that athlete’s have the freedom to choose any cause to support that they wish from society’s perspective. However,
Although society says that the issue is unimportant, the moral aspect of the cause must be considered as well.

This logic can be applied to athletes that create philanthropic foundations as well. The decision to begin a foundation is purely voluntary and therefore, is not bound to a universal code of morals unlike other elements of CSR. The choice of an athlete to use his or her personal assets to give back to the community is morally acceptable in its own sense. The decision on what cause to support is purely based on individual morals, and therefore the cause that the charity supports is unimportant. Fans will still view the athlete’s brand more positively because of the decision to give back to the community. This allows for a stronger identification and trust between the athlete and the fan, leading to an increase in donor intentions and support of the cause that the athlete supports.

**Conclusion**

This original research sought to address two issues with athlete philanthropy. First, exploring the moral obligation of athletes to give back to the community, and second if the cause that their charity supports matters. To address this, relevant literature was reviewed and a study was conducted on fans of sport to collect information on their attitudes toward non-profits and issue importance.

When reviewing the obligation of athletes to give back to the community, the focus was on whether or not athletes were morally obligated to create philanthropic foundations. Many athletes are contractually obligated to participate in some form
of philanthropic work as part of the organization as a whole, but some athletes go above and beyond these obligations to do more. Because of the power and influence that athletes have in today’s society, they not only represent the brand of the team they play for, but also represent their own human brand. Because of this, they are expected to follow the same four domains of CSR explained by Carroll (1979).

In Carroll’s four domains, he points out that philanthropic work is discretionary, and therefore is not an obligation of businesses (1979). This also applies to athletes as individuals. Because the choice to create philanthropic foundations is discretionary, there is no moral obligation for athletes to do so. However, many athletes choose to use their personal resources to participate in philanthropic activities anyway. This leads into the second part of the issue, whether the cause that these philanthropic foundations support matters.

In the study conducted of sport fans in the northeast United States, it was found that fans supported and respected foundations that supported a wide variety of causes. Nearly half of the respondents identified themselves with teams other than the Philadelphia Phillies, showing that team identification did not play a major role in their attitudes towards issue importance. The fans believed that each cause was worthwhile and that athletes should educate the public and raise awareness for their cause.

While fans showed support for each of the causes outlined in the survey, the moral aspect of choosing these causes must still be considered. Hogg points out that the decision on which causes to support is based on the athlete’s personal values...
and morals (2014). Because athletes have a finite amount of resources, they must decide which causes are of the highest importance to them personally and use their own morals to support their decision. Because of this, the cause that the charity supports is unimportant from both a moral standpoint, as well as a societal standpoint.

After reviewing the related literature, and analyzing the results of the original study, it was found that athletes do not have a moral obligation to create philanthropic foundations and that the cause of the foundations that are created is unimportant. Although there is no obligation, it is still morally good for the athlete to create charitable foundations, and the fact that they making the choice to give back at all make the issues unimportant. The decision to support a worthy cause is morally acceptable so long as it aligns with the athlete’s personal values and morals.

Appendix

Appendix A:

**Athlete Foundations Instrument for Use**

*Attitudes towards Nonprofit (Dean, 2002; $\alpha = .89$)*

1. I admire the Hamels Family Foundation.
2. I respect the Hamels Family Foundation.
3. The objectives of the Hamels Family Foundation are worthwhile.
4. The Hamels Family Foundation is a worthy cause.
5. I admire the Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation.
6. I respect the Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation.

7. The objectives of the Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation are worthwhile.

8. The Ryan Howard Big Piece Foundation is a worthy cause.

9. I admire the Jimmy Rollins Family Foundation.

10. I respect the Jimmy Rollins Family Foundation.

11. The objectives of the Jimmy Rollins Family Foundation are worthwhile.

12. The Jimmy Rollins Family Foundation is a worthy cause.

13. I admire the Utley Foundation.


15. The objectives of the Utley Foundation are worthwhile.

16. The Utley Foundation is a worthy cause.

**Issue Importance (Russell & Russell, 2010)**

17. I believe enhancing educational opportunities is an important issue.

18. I think it is vital for the professional athletes to enhance educational opportunities.

19. I believe that professional athletes have a responsibility to enhance educational opportunities.

20. I believe literacy is an important issue.

21. I think it is vital for professional athletes to improve literacy.

22. I believe that professional athletes have a responsibility to improve literacy.

23. I believe nutrition is an important issue.

24. I think it is vital for professional athletes to educate families about nutrition.
25. I believe that professional athletes have a responsibility to educate families about nutrition.

26. I believe animal cruelty is an important issue.

27. I think it is vital for professional athletes to raise awareness about animal cruelty.

28. I believe that professional athletes have a responsibility to raise awareness about animal cruelty.

Demographics

29. Age (dropdown; range)

30. Gender

31. Race (dropdown)
Works Cited


