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An Interactionist Perspective on Centrality and Racial Discrimination in Professional Baseball

David S. Czurak

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AN INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE ON CENTRALITY AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL

by

David S. Czurak

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 1994
The structuralist version of centrality has measured racial discrimination in professional baseball for the past two decades. Its reliance on positional groupings, based on location, has resulted in a count of racial occupancy at these locations, often without a comparative racial baseline. The structuralist premise has accused baseball of playing field discrimination, citing it as a black versus white issue while discounting other motivations. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, this structuralist account of centrality is flawed in that it lacked action. Nor has it correctly identified what is central to baseball, and many of its findings have been inconclusive. An interactionist theory of centrality properly locates baseball’s central interaction, provides a dramaturgical reading of baseball’s self-presentation, and reveals that, racially over the past decade, the percentage of white participation has declined, black activity has remained stagnant and restricted, while Hispanic action has achieved tremendous proportional gains. These racial adjustments appear to be due to economic motivation, mainly baseball’s pursuit of profit, potentially resulting in institutional, rather than personal, discrimination.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to James Petersen, Ronald Kramer, and Douglas Davidson, all of Western Michigan University, for their gracious and valuable contributions to my effort.

David S. Czurak
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CHAPTER I

THE CONSTRUCTION OF CENTRALITY

In 1970 the structuralist theory of centrality was born and, despite its shortcomings, has prevailed as the leading method of inquiry into racial discrimination studies in professional baseball, presenting the problem as a black versus white issue. The dilemma is actually more complicated than the structuralist version has uncovered. It is my contention that an interactionist theory of centrality is a more applicable and revealing method to assess racial tension in baseball.

In 1991 just twenty-two percent of black professional baseball players felt they were paid fairly. Only twelve percent indicated hiring black coaches was a priority for Major League owners. While a mere one percent perceived baseball management as actively encouraging minority ownership. (Johnson, 1991) These negative attitudes toward baseball were somewhat summarized by Deion Sanders, a black outfielder with the Atlanta Braves:

If you’re black and in baseball, there is no in-between. You’ve got to be a damn great prospect. You don’t see any so-so brothers pitching. There are none in the pen or role players. You aren’t going to be on the bench just drawing a salary if you’re just so-so and black. (Johnson, 1991, p. 24)

Here Sanders suggested that a black player must hit for a higher average, run the bases faster, and throw more accurately than his white counterpart. He also implied that the pitching mound was a restricted area; one reserved for white hurlers
only. Sanders' comment emphasized an underlying reality for black professional baseball players; racism exists in the Major Leagues.

For sport sociologists, their reality has been to determine a suitable theory and method to precisely assess and measure whether racial inequalities exist, where these inequities thrive, and to what degree minority players have been affected by them. Over the past two decades sociologists have almost exclusively wrestled with this dilemma through their technique of choice; the centrality concept, also known as the 'stacking' theory.

Centrality was formulated by John Loy and John McElvogue (1970). For baseball, they modeled a three-tiered, structural configuration of the playing field based on the spatial location of positions, the interaction among positions, and the responsibility of individual positions. Their logic produced a conceptual framework which viewed infielders and catchers as central, or important, positions, while outfielders were seen as noncentral, or less important, positions.

Baseball teams have a well defined social structure consisting of the repetitive and regulated interaction among a set of nine positions combined into three major substructures or interaction units: (1) the battery, consisting of pitcher and catcher; (2) the infield, consisting of 1st base, 2nd base, shortstop, and 3rd base; and (3) the outfield, consisting of leftfield, centerfield, and rightfield positions. (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 8)

Based on their structural grouping, they created a methodological template which has been unquestionably employed by sociologists to investigate racial problems in professional baseball. It is as though centrality has reached a 'sacred cow' status within sociology, while also having gained credibility in the sport media.
Columnist Jim Myers (1993, p. 4), in his commentary concerning racial segregation in baseball, endorsed the concept's explanatory power, "Sociologists call this 'stacking' and say it's governed by common racial stereotypes: Black athletes end up at positions where speed is valued and tend not to play positions considered central to the action or team leadership." However, despite its popularity, I question whether centrality was validly constructed and if it has factually measured discriminating situations in professional baseball. In short, I feel an evaluation of centrality is warranted.

To properly evaluate the theory, we must review centrality's construction. Our historical appraisal will show its original foundation was built from Grusky's (1963) work on formal structures, while its racial implications were borrowed from Blalock's (1962) propositions for organizational discrimination.

Grusky's Formal Structure

Loy and McElvogue's (1970) construction of centrality was greatly inspired by Oscar Grusky's (1963) work on organizational structure for managerial advancement. Their adaptation was nearly a carbon-copy of Grusky's three-tiered, three component, structural model:

The playing organization of professional baseball teams consists of three major interaction units, outfielders, infielders, and the pitchers and catchers. The constituent positions of each unit differ with respect to the attributes of spatial location, type of task, and frequency of interaction. (Grusky, 1963, p. 347)
Grusky theorized that the pitching mound was the area which reflected the central location of the playing field, and felt that positions spatially located closer to the mound, namely the infielders and catcher, were central to the game. He thought the more central a player’s spatial location, the more likely the player had an opportunity for professional advancement, as these positions supposedly held more value for the organization. Loy and McElvogue agreed with Grusky’s structural design and adopted it into their theory. They then labeled their structural framework a "social structure" (p. 8) and central positions as "the most responsible or so-called brains positions." (p. 18)

The next, and possibly most important, component for Grusky was the nature of the task performed by each position. Here he specified two task types; dependent and independent. Grusky (1963, p. 346) defined independent tasks as "the kind performed without the necessity of coordination with the activities of other positions." Although he neglected to define dependent tasks, we can assume that Grusky felt these were the opposite of independent tasks; the type which required coordination with other positions. He then treated dependent tasks as interaction, the determining concept behind centrality. Grusky’s questionable definition of interaction was readily accepted by Loy and McElvogue.

Grusky’s final component was frequency of interaction. He determined this through the number of dependent tasks performed at each position, and found these tasks to be related to the position’s spatial location. He felt the closer a position was to the pitching mound, the structure’s most central location, the greater the position’s
dependent tasks and, thus, the greater the frequency of interaction for the position.

Grusky's result was a structural layout which held that independent tasks were the majority for outfielders, while infielders and catchers were positions largely comprised of dependent tasks.

As noted earlier, spatial location and nature of task are mutually correlated with frequency of interaction. Applying these criteria, we classify infielders and catchers as high interactors, and outfielders and pitchers, low interactors. (Grusky, 1963, p. 349)

Loy and McElvogue freely injected Grusky's presumably correlated components into their construction, only altering his terminology. For them, Grusky's high interactors became their "central" positions, while his low interactors became their "noncentral" positions.

However, Grusky admitted his theoretical construction and interactive ranking of positions were not based on any systematic empirical evidence, but rather on his informal observation:

This statement like many others is largely based on personal observation. As a start one might utilize box-score data to determine more precisely which positions have the highest proportion of independent and dependent tasks. (Grusky, 1963, p. 348)

Loy and McElvogue's real contribution to centrality was to take up Grusky's challenge and attempt to empirically determine the proportion of dependent and independent tasks for each position, with the former qualifying as interaction. They then measured for frequency of interaction from a purely defensive perspective. Their lone unit of measurement, and a potentially biased one, was the number of assists made by each position: "We decided that the total number of "assists" made by
occupants of given field positions during a season would serve as an adequate operational indicator of centrality." (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, pp. 19-20)

In baseball, an assist is defined as more than one player performing to create at least one out. An example would be the shortstop fielding a ground ball and successfully throwing the ball to the first baseman ahead of the runner. Here the shortstop is credited with an assist and the first baseman is given a putout. We should note that infielders have many more opportunities for assists than the other positions.

For the 1967 season, Loy and McElvogue totaled the number of assists for each position and reported that infielders had a greater number of assists than outfielders. They decided this measurement provided verification for their interactive construction. However, in the process, a statistical fly surfaced in their methodological ointment. The catching position, a valuable part of their infield, apparently had few assists to its credit. Their solution? They changed the definition of their assist variable for catchers only, by including the position’s putouts with their assists. When an outfielder catches a fly ball he is given a putout. Thus, a putout is a variable which reflected Grusky’s definition of independent, not dependent, tasks, and one which stands in direct contrast to an assist. Loy and McElvogue rationalized their variable change for the catching position:

In the scoring of a game, the strikeouts made by the pitcher which are caught by the catcher are recorded as putouts for the catcher. For purposes of analysis we considered such putouts as assists. We reasoned that the catcher calls the pitch and assists in making the strikeouts by receiving the thrown ball from the pitcher. (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 21)
In effect they had created two separate variables for their one-variable model; one for infielders and outfielders and another for catchers. With their definitional shift, it came as no surprise that the catching position had the greatest number of 'assists' and, therefore, was classified as a central position.

Realistically the structural conception of centrality was born through Loy and McElvogue's representation of Grusky's work, despite Grusky's theoretical disclaimer and Loy and McElvogue's methodological deviation.

Blalock's Occupational Discrimination

Loy and McElvogue (1970) derived their racial implications for centrality from H. M. Blalock's (1962) work on occupational discrimination. Blalock strongly believed that minorities in our society were discriminated against in the marketplace by being relegated to low-paying, entry level positions.

Historically, most American minorities have entered the labor force at or very near the bottom of the occupational ladder. Prior to the restriction of immigration during the first quarter of the 20th Century, each immigrant group was followed by more recent arrivals to take its place at the base of the pyramid. (Blalock, 1962, p. 240)

However, Blalock also acknowledged that certain industries had adopted more open hiring practices toward minorities and he felt professional baseball qualified as one of these more progressive occupations, one which offered greater opportunities for blacks.

On the other hand there are certain types of occupations which, particularly during periods of labor scarcity, have begun to open up to Negroes. The purpose of the present paper is to examine one of these occupations,
Blalock proposed two key indicators of whether discrimination was present within a particular occupation. First was the degree of competition. Although some have felt that competition fuels discrimination, especially across racial groups, he theorized that the higher the level of occupational competition the lower the likelihood of occupational discrimination. Blalock based his assumption on Becker's (1957) finding that discrimination should be less prevalent in competitive industries than monopolistic ones, as the former were more inclined to search for, hire, and retain the best qualified individuals for each position in order to maintain a competitive edge. Blalock (1962, p. 242) concluded that professional baseball was very competitive, "Perhaps the most obvious fact about the baseball profession is its highly competitive nature."

Year later, Donald Cymrot (1985) verified Blalock's assumption concerning the relationship between competition and discrimination. Cymrot determined that as competition increased for baseball, discrimination decreased in baseball.

The main conclusion of this study is that, for discrimination, market structure matters. These results are important for what they demonstrate about market processes as for what they show about the labor market in baseball. Competition may be a more effective tool for lessening or eliminating discrimination than a legislative or judicial edict. (Cymrot, 1985, p. 611)

Blalock's second and most crucial exhibit was the level of individual skill and performance necessary to obtain and maintain a position within the occupation. He contended the higher the ratio of individual performance needed for the position,
rather than the degree of interaction required, then the lower the likelihood for occupational discrimination, because performance could be measured and compared across individuals and positions. Blalock determined the art of playing baseball largely contained individual performance acts rather than required interactional activities. He saw the former as the type of action which could not mask discrimination.

... but individual skill is of utmost importance to the productivity of the "work group." Furthermore, skill and performance are easily evaluated. There is a whole series of precise quantitative measures of performance which can be standardized across teams and players. Each player can thus easily be compared with his competitors. There is no question whatsoever as to which batters or pitchers have the best records. (Blalock, 1962, p. 242)

Because of baseball's dependency on individual performance over interaction, Blalock felt that playing field positions were relatively equal and a player's job security was positively correlated with his performance.

There is no hierarchy of positions such that if the top man is replaced, every other person moves up one notch. In effect, this means that one gets ahead on the basis of his own performance alone. (Blalock, 1962, p. 243)

Baseball's reliance on individual performance for the organization's overall success prompted Blalock to declare that blacks, along with other minorities, were provided with more advantages for occupational acceptance and advancement than many other professions, specifically those which demanded interaction among coworkers and clients as a requirement.

Another important factor has worked to the advantage of the Negro in organized baseball. In this profession performance depends only to a slight degree on interpersonal relations and manipulative skills. In contrast, a salesman's performance, also easily evaluated, depends to a large extent on his
ability to persuade a prospective client. If the client is prejudiced, the Negro salesman is especially handicapped. Although a particular pitcher may be prejudiced against Negroes, there is little he can do to hamper the performance of the Negro slugger, short of an attempt at foul play. (Blalock, 1962, p. 244)

Here, again, Blalock suggested that interaction was not a key element in determining a player's occupational status, a status baseball defined by individual performance. Blalock also contended that if performance was more vital to an occupation than interaction, then the profession would have fewer requirements and restrictions which, in turn, would allow minorities more admittance to the profession.

In baseball it is also difficult to control the minority's access to the training necessary for high-level performance. Such skill depends to a larger extent on innate abilities which vary considerably from individual to individual. Nor does training in baseball require a college education . . . Although a long period of training or apprenticeship is required, it is difficult for whites to obtain a monopoly in training facilities, as they have in the case of a number of trades and professions. (Blalock, 1962, p. 244)

Finally, because Blalock believed that individual performance, and not interaction, was central to the game, he felt discrimination could be quantitatively measured by his thirteen theoretical propositions, nine of which focused on individual performance. Through his propositions Blalock concluded:

Professional baseball has provided Negroes with one of the relatively few avenues for escape from traditional blue-collar occupations . . . This is not to say that Negro players do not face some discrimination on the part of their teammates or that they are completely integrated off the job as well as on the field. But we seem to have in professional baseball an occupation which is remarkably free of racial discrimination. (Blalock, 1962, p. 242)

Despite calling Blalock's analysis "an excellent example of how the critical examination of a sport situation can enhance the development of sociological theory in an area of central concern", Loy and McElvogue (1970, p. 6) disagreed with
Blalock's racial assessment of baseball by suggesting he was naive. They decided to test Blalock's conclusion that baseball's playing field was relatively free of racial discrimination by incorporating three of his propositions for their study:

1. The lower the degree of purely social interaction on the job [especially interaction involving both sexes], the lower the degree of discrimination.

2. To the extent that performance level is relatively independent of skill in interpersonal relations, the lower the degree of discrimination. [Lower discrimination is predicted where one works with things rather than where one works with or manipulates persons.]

3. To the extent that an individual's success depends primarily on his own performance, rather than on limiting or restricting the performance of specific other individuals, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by group members. (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 7, the bracketed portions were part of Blalock's original propositions but were omitted by the authors.)

Loy and McElvogue did not explain why they chose these three of Blalock's thirteen propositions for their testing. Nor did they indicate any reasons for not including the entirety of the first two propositions. This latter point is important because their edited version of Blalock's propositions loses some of the measuring power inherent to them. When the entire first proposition is considered, the baseball field automatically becomes a less racially discriminating environment than most other professions because only one gender is present. As for the second proposition, their exclusion of working with things rather than the manipulation of persons rejected the activity which occurs on the baseball field; players attempting to field, catch, hit, throw, and outrun a "thing", namely the ball. Their effort disregarded Blalock's meaning and intention of his propositions. In short, Loy and McElvogue addressed
Blalock's propositions in the same manner they handled their own variable, assists; they modified these to suit their own purpose.

Since the dimensions of interaction and task dependency treated by Blalock are included in our concept of centrality, we subsumed his three propositions under a more general one, stating that: "discrimination is positively related to centrality." (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 7)

Despite Blalock's emphasis on individual performance, Loy and McElvogue transformed it to an inexplicit "dimensions of interaction and task dependency". These terms belonged to Grusky and were not "treated" by Blalock, yet they accorded him with this dubious honor. For Loy and McElvogue to merge Blalock's three propositions into one which read "discrimination is positively related to centrality" was illogically inconsistent with Blalock's conclusion that, in comparison to other professions, baseball was "remarkably free of racial discrimination." (Blalock, 1962, p. 242)

Operating from their hypothesis that racial segregation was positively related to centrality, Loy and McElvogue categorized positional data by race from the 1967 season and reported that minority players were more likely to be found in outfield, or noncentral, positions, while white players were largely represented at infield and catcher, or central positions. They did not test for the pitching position, their most central location, because of statistical problems, an issue we will explore later. Ultimately, through their racial headcount of the various positions, Loy and McElvogue concluded:

... that there may be a "vicious cycle" operating in professional sports. Negroes, because they are not liked by the white establishment, are placed in
peripheral positions; and, as a result of this placement, do not have the opportunity of high rates of interaction with teammates, and do not receive the potential positive sentiment which might accrue from such interaction. (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 22)

Loy and McElvogue (1970, pp. 16-17) reached their resolution from a 1967 sample of 218 baseball players, of which 39% were minorities. Here they presented the total number of players by race at the various positions, without reporting percentage of racial occupancy for each position with comparison to a baseline condition. However, when their data is converted to percentages we find that minority players comprised 38% of the first basemen, 36% of the second basemen, 23% of the shortstops, 36% of the third basemen, 10% of the catchers, and 56% of the three outfield positions. Of the 131 central position players in their sample, 28% were members of minority races. According to 1970 U.S. Census Bureau figures from the Department of Commerce, 12.5% of the total United States population were black and other races. Thus, black and Hispanic players were overrepresented at every position presented by Loy and McElvogue, except catcher, when their percentage was compared with their general population percentage.

If we examined only the black players in Loy and McElvogue’s (1970, pp. 16-17) 1967 data, we would find that blacks were underrepresented at catcher and shortstop with 3% and 4% respectively. But blacks were well represented at the other positions as 24% of first basemen were black, as were 16% of second basemen, 25% of third basemen, and 41% of outfielders. Overall, black players filled 15% of all the
central positions, a 36% increase from 1965 figures, and a proportion slightly higher than their 11.4% representation in the 1970 general population census.

Loy and McElvogue's data on minority players hardly presented a case for rampant racial segregation in baseball. Yet, they felt that minorities were being forced, or 'stacked', into noncentral positions and denied normal interaction and opportunities freely accorded white players because white professional baseball management disliked them.

Centrality's Legitimation

Despite Loy and McElvogue's puzzling data interpretation, theoretical manipulations, and methodological exceptions, the sociology of sport field has eagerly accepted the centrality premise for discrimination investigations. Possibly the crowning endorsement for Loy and McElvogue's concept of centrality came from the highly respected duo of G. Stanley Eitzen and Norman R. Yetman. Eitzen and Yetman in their often cited 1977 article, Immune From Racism?, commended the work of Loy and McElvogue as explaining "racial segregation by team position in sports." (Eitzen & Yetman, 1977, p. 4)

Eitzen and Yetman (1977) then clearly detailed the social consequences of the centrality concept as; (a) racial segregation, an act of separating one group from a main body, and (b) racial discrimination, an act based on prejudice. The latter effect, discrimination, can occur across three situations; (1) an individual can be denied a position on the basis of race, (2) an individual can be denied equal pay for equitable
performance on the basis of race, and (3) an individual can be denied an equal opportunity for advancement on the basis of race. Although the attitudes which support discrimination can be expressed toward a group, the act itself is usually committed against an individual. Because of this subjective facet of discrimination and despite Eitzen and Yetman's sanction, I question whether the objective nature and suspect data of centrality are able to actually assess the source of, and reason for, the act.

For example, regarding Loy and McElvogue's racial headcount method in accounting for positional segregation, they willingly blamed professional baseball management for the plight of the minority player, "We speculate that segregation in professional sports is more a function of management than playing personnel." (Loy and McElvogue, 1970, p. 18) However, because their method was located at a single point in time, they were unable to account for the player's personal biography and place in history. Perhaps forced positional segregation does exists, but they presented no evidence which showed that professional management was responsible for the stacking. The positional stacking could have easily occurred at other levels of a player's career, such as high school, legion, or college ball, and the Major Leagues could have been simply inheriting an already established position. Loy and McElvogue's method was incapable of measuring a player's position prior to the Major Leagues.

Two of the three discriminating situations are equally as difficult to measure through centrality. As for being denied a position because of race, centrality did not
include a method to measure which players were 'cut' from a team and if there was racial bias in the denial of a position. As for being denied an opportunity for advancement, a number of studies, including Grusky's (1963), which was based on a sample size of eleven managers, revealed that most managers were white and from central positions. But, again, centrality was lacking because it did not contain a system to measure who was denied a managerial position and on what grounds.

Centrality best measures discrimination where equal pay is denied for equitable performance. This comes as no surprise because the measurement is based on comparing salary levels with readily available individual performance statistics, a method which owes more to the work of Blalock (1962) than either Grusky (1963) or Loy and McElvogue (1970).

However, despite centrality's methodological limitations, the concept became a legitimate and often used method largely through Eitzen and Yetman's confirmation. They agreed that centrality depicted the playing field as segregated in "that the central positions were indeed overwhelmingly manned by whites, while blacks were overrepresented in noncentral positions." (Eitzen & Yetman, 1977, p. 4) Eventually, the centrality concept evolved into a theoretical template, as nearly two decades of researchers have embraced its trappings.

We will return to the works of Blalock and Grusky in Chapter III, viewing them from the margins. Chapter IV will find us critically revisiting Loy and McElvogue in greater detail. Then I will present an interactionist's view of centrality based on the thoughts of Herbert Blumer, Norman Denzin, and Erving Goffman. In the
final chapter, I will offer some implications of an interactionist theory of centrality.

Next, however, we shift from a theoretical posture to a quantitative analysis, as I discuss racial economic discrimination for baseball as measured through the centrality template.
CHAPTER II

CENTRALITY, ECONOMIC DISCRIMINATION, AND BASEBALL

Except for Gerald Scully's (1974a, p. 367) work, where he determined that "racial wage discrimination is a feature of the baseball labor market", most post-centrality investigations have found little evidence that economic racial discrimination exists in baseball. Curiously, Anthony Pascal and Leonard Rapping (1972), using data from the same year as Scully, reported that pay discrimination against blacks did not exist. Despite Scully's interpretation, Pascal and Rapping's finding seemed to shape the future for further racial economic examinations.

Henry Raimondo (1983) used 1977 data and failed to discover any significant difference between the salaries of black and white players. Richard Hill and William Spellman (1984, p. 111) agreed with Raimondo's findings, "Overall, the evidence from our investigation and from Raimondo's [1983] provides little support for the hypothesis of wage discrimination in Major League Baseball in the late seventies."

Later Kevin Christiano (1986) found little reason to advocate a position that economic discrimination was present. Also using 1977 data, Christiano uncovered:

... a single instance of a statistically significant difference in player salary by race which went unexplained by the other components of the model. In this instance, white infielders are apparently paid more for each home run they hit than are identically situated blacks. (Christiano, 1986, p. 151)
Wilbert Leonard II (1988, p. 278) used 1987 data and reported "the salaries of baseball players varying in race/ethnicity were not consistently different even while holding other theoretically relevant variables constant." Christiano (1988, p. 148) returned for another effort, also using 1987 data, and "discovered little reliable evidence of economic discrimination by race." E. Smith and Monica Seff (1989) found black players had a higher mean and median income than whites and Hispanics. Regressing data from 1986, Smith and Seff (1989, p. 103) concluded that race and position "do not effect salary." Finally, Marc Lavoie and Wilbert Leonard (1990, p. 394) reported "that there is no salary discrimination against blacks in baseball."

Quite possibly the reason for the lack of evidence for economic racial discrimination in baseball, as measured through the centrality concept, can be attributed to, oddly enough, a study by Scully. Scully (1974b, p. 926), one of the few who concluded that blacks were paid unfairly, wrote that "the concept that ballplayer salaries are related to performance seems reasonably well confirmed." Scully’s finding provided support for Blalock’s (1962) contention that individual performance, and not interaction, was a key determinant of occupational acceptance, advancement, and the degree of discrimination present. Because of the relationship of individual performance to baseball salaries, the centrality concept is best suited to measure economic racial discrimination rather than positional segregation and the other two discrimination situations.

However, all the above studies except one, that being Hill and Spellman (1984), had a common factor; these all employed single season performance statistics
in their testing. This method disregarded the player's personal biography and place in history in relation to his accumulated salary level. It treated a player's salary as only a result of his previous season's performance, while it ignored his prior contributions and years of service. C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 6) would have labeled this method incomplete, "No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey." Christiano (1986) recognized this void in his own study:

One drawback to this model that cannot be addressed directly is the effect on multiyear contracts on the validity of salary predictions. If a large number of players are working under multiyear agreements with team managements, then the antecedents of salary data lie more than one season back. (Christiano, 1986, p. 147)

The answer to Christiano's dilemma was to employ the player's career performance statistics in relation to his current salary level. Consequently, if a player was under a multiyear contract then the issue becomes meaningless, as his career statistics account for his personal baseball biography, locate him in his proper place in history, and provide a reference for future performance expectations, while fulfilling Mills' call for the sociological imagination.

I incorporated the sample's career performance statistics in my centrality study of economic racial discrimination in baseball, and surfaced with some noteworthy results. Not only did I find that noncentral players were paid more than central players, but blacks were the highest salaried racial group, and starting pitchers, the position ignored by centrality, emerged as the highest paid position, while relief pitchers earned the most per appearance than any other position. As we will observe
later, these findings will prove to be vital to a new theory of centrality based on symbolic interaction.

Method

Sample

I adopted my sample (n=223) from a 1991 census of baseball’s active elite, those players who earned a minimum of one million dollars per season. (Associated Press, 1991a). I theorized that an analysis of a sample consisting of the highest-rewarded players would reveal the positions considered most central, or important, to the baseball organizations as reward traditionally reflects performance and value to the organizations. Thus, in accordance with Blalock and Scully, those with the highest reward level mostly likely had the strongest performance and value for the firm. My sample contained 124 players and 99 pitchers.

In 1991, the Major League active rosters totaled 650, and with each team averaging a pitching staff of ten, this meant approximately 390 of the total were players, while 260 were pitchers. Thus, my population of elite accounted for 31.8% of all the players and 38.1% of all the pitchers. Of the 124 players, 68 occupied central positions, while 56 were noncentral. Of the 99 pitchers, 60 were starters, while 39 were relievers. Ninety-five percent of the players and 96% of the pitchers had attained free agency status. All positions and teams were represented in my sample.
Data

To determine the salary formulation, I based the data model upon the players' and pitchers' career performance statistics. I felt using the lifetime performance figures would add an historical analysis to the project and more accurately represent a player's biographical contribution to his salary level.

I constructed two data models; one for players and another for the pitching position. The following ten variables were present in both models: the player's respective conference; the player's respective team; the player's respective position, (Players who were listed at more than one position were coded at the position they played most often during the 1991 season. Pitchers were coded as 'starters' or 'relievers'.); a player's number of Major League seasons; a free agency variable where '01' represented players who had achieved free agency status and '00' represented players who had not attained free agency; an ethnicity variable where '01' represented white players and '00' represented nonwhite players; race, whites were coded as '1', blacks as '2', and Hispanics as '3', (Racial identification was made from a Sports Illustrated (1987) article and a private baseball card collection); players who pitched or batted left-handed or were switch hitters were coded '01', while right-handed players were assigned '00', and the player's total number of Major League games played.

The performance variables for my players' model were: the player's lifetime number of times at bat; the player's career total of runs scored; the player's career batting average; the player's career hit total; the player's lifetime total of doubles; the
player's lifetime total of triples; the player's career home run total; the player's lifetime number of runs driven in; the player's career total of stolen bases; and a centrality variable where '01' represented central positions and '00' represented non-central positions.

For my pitchers' model, I included the following variables: the pitcher's lifetime number of games won; the pitcher's career total of games lost; the pitcher's career earned run average; the pitcher's total number of complete games; the pitcher's career total of innings pitched; the pitcher's career number of hits allowed; the pitcher's career total of earned runs; the pitcher's lifetime number of walks issued; and the pitcher's lifetime number of strikeouts. For relievers, I substituted the pitcher's career save total in lieu of games won, and removed complete games from their analysis.

I compiled the career statistics from the 1992 Baseball Almanac and the 1992 Sporting News Baseball Register. I collected the sample's annual salary figures from an Associated Press (1991a) story. All the data I used were complete through the 1991 season.

Results

First, I will present the results for players; their descriptive statistics, their salary means, and my regression analysis of the variables which accounted for their salary levels. Then I will offer the same findings for the pitching position.
Players' Descriptives.

In my sample of players who were baseball's elite (n=124), 54.8% (n=68) were in central positions, while 45.2% (n=56) were in noncentral positions. This distribution closely resembled the positional assignment of centrality. Those positions defined as central constituted 55.5% of the concept's positions, while noncentral positions accounted for 44.4% of all the theory's positions.

Fifty percent (n=62) of my sample consisted of white players, while 37.9% (n=47) were black and 12.1% (n=15) were Hispanic. With 50% of the players in my sample being nonwhite, minorities were represented at a higher proportion in the baseball elite than in all of baseball, 32.8% (Baseball America, 1991), or the general population, 15.9% (Statistical Abstract, 1991).

In my sample of baseball's millionaires, black players were represented at a percentage, 37.9%, more than double their number in the baseball population, 17.2%, and triple their proportion in the general population, 12.4%. Meanwhile, Hispanic players were slightly underrepresented as members of the baseball elite, 12.1%, when compared to their percentage in all of baseball, 14.6%, but overrepresented in comparison to their percentage in the general population, 3.5%. White players, 50% of my elite sample, were underrepresented in comparison to their percentage in all of baseball, 68.2%, and their percentage in the general population, 84.1%. Nearly 70% of baseball's black players were situated in my elite sample, compared to 26% of all Hispanic players and 23% of all white players.
Table 1
Position Type Distribution of Elite Players by Race (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th></th>
<th>Noncentral</th>
<th></th>
<th>Baseball</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positions</td>
<td>(n = 68)</td>
<td>Positions</td>
<td>(n = 56)</td>
<td>Elites</td>
<td>(n = 124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1 revealed, white players occupied the majority of centrality's central positions, 63.2%. But, black, 19.1%, and Hispanic players, 17.6%, were represented at central positions greater than their percentage in all of baseball and the general population.

Furthermore, Hispanics were significantly more represented in central positions than noncentral, as 80% of the Hispanic elite were found in central positions. This Hispanic representation was higher than the percentage of white, 69%, and black
players, 28%, in central positions. Black players occupied the majority of noncentral positions, 60.7%.

Table 2 provided a comparison of positions by race with the percentage of racial occupancy for each position. When compared to their population in all of baseball, black players (17.2%) were only underrepresented at the catching position. However, Hispanics (14.6%) were underrepresented at third base, the three outfield positions, and designated hitter, while white players (68.2%) were lacking at first base, second base, shortstop, outfield, and designated hitter.

Players' Salaries

My analysis of the positional salary means for baseball's elite revealed that noncentral positions were paid $428,200 more per season than centrality's most important positions. This salary relationship was also present for all of baseball, as noncentral positions earned an average of $313,100 more per season than central positions. (Associated Press, 1991b)

As Table 3 revealed, the highest paid player positions for both the baseball elite and the general baseball population were the traditional hitting positions of outfield, first base, and designated hitter, rather than centrality's infielders and catchers.
Table 2
Racial Distribution of Baseball Elite by Position (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>White Elite (n = 62)</th>
<th>Black Elite (n = 47)</th>
<th>Hispanic Elite (n = 15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catcher</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Base</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Base</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Base</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortstop</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncentral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lft Field</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ctr Field</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rht Field</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Hitter</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Positional percentage totals are to be read across the rows.
Table 3

Comparison of Salary Means by Position for Baseball Elite and General Baseball Population (In Thousands of Dollars, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salary Means for Baseball Elite</th>
<th>Salary Means for Baseball Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catcher</td>
<td>$1,705.4</td>
<td>$1,198.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Base</td>
<td>$2,185.7</td>
<td>$1,696.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Base</td>
<td>$1,186.8</td>
<td>$1,035.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Base</td>
<td>$1,864.5</td>
<td>$1,151.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortstop</td>
<td>$1,733.0</td>
<td>$1,146.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All Central

Positions  $1,905.7 $1,245.8

Noncentral

Outfield $2,304.4 $1,523.4

D Hitter $2,193.5 $1,594.3

All Noncentral

Positions $2,333.9 $1,558.9
Table 4 offered a comparison of positional salary means for the elite along racial lines. On the average, black players earned $238,200 more per season than whites, and $245,600 more than Hispanics. White and Hispanic players were paid relatively equally, as whites only outearned Hispanics by $7,400. The highest paid positions for blacks were right field, $2,597,500, and left field, $2,552,400; for Hispanics it was right field, $3,075,000; and for white players it was designated hitter at $2,865,000. All of these positions were considered noncentral by the centrality concept.

Table 4

Comparison of Salary Means for Baseball Elite and Baseball Population by Race (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Salary Means for Baseball Elite</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
<th>Salary Means for Baseball Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$2,009.7</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td>$ 867.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>$2,247.9</td>
<td>.0001</td>
<td>$1,051.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>$2,002.3</td>
<td>.0017</td>
<td>$ 552.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>$ 873.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Salary means are presented in thousands of dollars. Source for baseball population salary means: Lapchick & Stuckey (1991). I did not make a distinction between Hispanic and Latin players for the baseball elite because of their low frequency (n = 15).
Players' Regression Analysis

My stepwise regression analysis, as presented in Table 5, revealed that the construct of the players' salary level was largely due to the number of home runs hit (HR) and bases stolen (SB), and, to a lesser degree, free agency status (AGENT) and batting average (BA). While experience (EXPER) had a negative relationship with salary.

Table 5
Multiple Regression Results for Players’ Salary Construction of Baseball Elite (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>5.818</td>
<td>.7213</td>
<td>8.113</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>1.863</td>
<td>.3613</td>
<td>4.781</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPER</td>
<td>-99.653</td>
<td>-.4774</td>
<td>-4.869</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGENT</td>
<td>885.989</td>
<td>.2485</td>
<td>3.475</td>
<td>.0007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>8.900</td>
<td>.2360</td>
<td>3.428</td>
<td>.0008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Stepwise method, n = 124.
The race (RACE Beta = -.0538, t = -.334, p = .7389) and centrality (CENT Beta = -.1706, t = -.444, p = .6582) variables had no effect on salary. Thus, being a white, central player was not an advantage for contract negotiations.

If we return to the variables which most accounted for the players’ salaries, home runs and stolen bases, it becomes easy for us to determine why the noncentral players were paid more than those occupying centrality’s prime positions: These outperformed the central positions across the key variables. Within my elite sample noncentral players averaged more home runs, 15.0 to 11.2, averaged more stolen bases, 18.0 to 10.3, and also had higher batting averages, 276.4 to 270.9, than central players. Thus, for my sample, power and speed were the determining factors for salary and the reason why the three outfield positions, first base, and designated hitter were the highest paid; these comprised the traditional hitting positions.

Not coincidentally, this explanation also extended support for why black players were the highest paid racial group. Blacks averaged more home runs than whites, 14.3 to 12.3, averaged more stolen bases, 18.4 to 10.0, and had higher batting averages, 275.0 to 271.5. Hispanic players had the highest batting average, 275.9, were second in average stolen bases, 15.2, and last in average home runs, 11.4. Again, blacks were the highest paid group because of their power and speed.

Table 6 presented a comparison of the regression coefficients for the racial groups in accounting for their wage level, and run-producing statistics were the most common. For white players, runs batted in (RBI) and runs scored (RUNS) were most important. Home runs (HR) and bases stolen (SB) were vital for black players, the
two variables which most defined the salary level for the entire sample. Home runs were also significant for Hispanic players. Please notice that batting averages were not significant for the racial equations. Thus, again, speed and power were primary, while hitting consistency was a secondary condition to salary determination.

Pitchers’ Descriptives

Of the 99 elite pitchers, 60 (60.6%) were starters, while 39 (39.4%) were relievers. Slightly more than two-thirds (67.7%) threw righthanded. Eighty-six (86.9%) were white, eight (8.1%) were Hispanic, and only five (5.1%) were black. Fifty-eight percent of the white pitchers were starters, as were 75% of the Hispanics and 80% of the blacks. Both minority groups were underrepresented at the pitching position in relation to their proportion in the general baseball population.

Pitchers’ Salaries

The mean salary for all pitchers was $2,124,414 per season. However, the starting elite pitchers proved to be the highest paid position on the diamond by averaging $2,314,717 annually, edging outfielders for this honor by ten thousand dollars. Hispanic starters were the highest paid racial group at $2,557,500. Black starting pitchers averaged $2,302,500, while their white counterparts earned an annual average of $2,286,560. Thus, Hispanic starters earned an average of $255,000 more per season than blacks and $270,940 more than white starting pitchers.
Table 6
Comparison of Players' Regression Coefficients of Baseball Elite by Race (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adj R Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.4736</td>
<td>.4366</td>
<td>12.82</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>.3925</td>
<td>.3501</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>.5429</td>
<td>.5088</td>
<td>15.44</td>
<td>.0017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBI</td>
<td>1.581</td>
<td>.6606</td>
<td>2.846</td>
<td>.0061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPER</td>
<td>-169.545</td>
<td>-.8725</td>
<td>-4.251</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUNS</td>
<td>1.396</td>
<td>.6137</td>
<td>2.489</td>
<td>.0158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGENT</td>
<td>890.805</td>
<td>.2499</td>
<td>2.429</td>
<td>.0183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>5.849</td>
<td>.7129</td>
<td>4.706</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>2.291</td>
<td>.5737</td>
<td>4.061</td>
<td>.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPER</td>
<td>-116.648</td>
<td>-.5129</td>
<td>-3.144</td>
<td>.0030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>7.550</td>
<td>.7368</td>
<td>3.930</td>
<td>.0017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The elite relievers averaged $1,831,641 per season, with the lone black reliever being the highest paid at $2,792,00, $960,359 over the mean figure. White relievers averaged $1,846,528 per year, $14,887 above the average wage. The two Hispanic relief pitchers were paid an average of $1,083,500, $748,141 below the position’s annual average.

The starting pitchers in my elite sample were paid an average of $13,580 per inning pitched. Hispanic starters earned $16,363 for each inning pitched, while black elites drew an average of $15,967 and whites claimed $12,536 per inning. However, the solitary black reliever earned a mean of $36,737 per inning pitched.

The white relievers averaged $19,356 and Hispanic relief pitchers received $15,926 per inning. Overall, the mean wage for each inning pitched by an elite reliever was $19,696, $6,116 more per inning than the elite starters. Thus, the elite relief pitchers were baseball’s highest paid ‘hourly’ worker.

Pitchers’ Regression Analysis

As shown in Table 8, the stepwise regression for the starting elite pitchers revealed that earned run average (ERA) and complete games (CG) primarily accounted for their salary formulation. Having achieved free agency status (AGENT) was also a significant contributor to the starters’ salary level.

However, race (RACE Beta = .0743, t = .686, p = .4958), as in the case for the elite players, had no effect on the starting pitchers’ salary.
### Table 7
Comparison of Pitchers' Salary Means and Wage Per Inning of Baseball Elite
by Position and Race (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Salary Mean</th>
<th>Wage Per Inning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>$2,124.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>$2,314.7</td>
<td>$13,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>$2,286.6</td>
<td>$12,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$2,302.5</td>
<td>$15,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>$2,557.5</td>
<td>$16,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relievers</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>$1,831.6</td>
<td>$19,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>$1,846.5</td>
<td>$19,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$2,792.0</td>
<td>$36,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$1,083.5</td>
<td>$15,926</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Salary means are presented in thousands of dollars.

Free agency status was also relevant to the elite relievers' salary construction, but not as consequential as the number of saves (SV). Again, race (RACE Beta = .1600, t = 1.271, p = .2121) was not significant to the relief pitchers' wages either.
Table 8
Comparison of Pitchers' Regression Coefficients of Baseball Elite by Position (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adj R Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starters</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>.3646</td>
<td>.3305</td>
<td>10.71</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relievers</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>.4296</td>
<td>.3979</td>
<td>13.56</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<tr>
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<td>.2950</td>
<td>2.688</td>
<td>.0094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</table>

Hispanic starting pitchers were the highest paid racial group and they had the lowest earned run average of 3.37. Their figure compared to 3.45 for black starters.
and 3.65 for whites. Black starting pitchers averaged the most complete games per season, 4.59, slightly higher than whites, 4.33, and nearly a full game more than Hispanic starters at 3.67. Therefore, the racial salary level for the starting pitchers appeared to be representatively based on their individual performances.

However, saves (SV), the leading indicator of the relievers’ salary, may not be as representative. While the average number of saves per season matched the racial salary ranking, two factors must be considered when interpreting this finding; (1) there were only three minority relief pitchers, and (2) not all relievers serve as 'closers'. This latter element is meaningful as teams usually designate one relief pitcher as the 'closer', and this reliever is granted many more opportunities to record a save than the rest of the bullpen’s members.

Nonetheless, the sole black elite reliever was the highest paid and, accordingly, averaged the highest number of saves per season at 24. White relievers, the second highest paid group, had a mean of 10.7 saves per season, while the Hispanic relievers averaged only 3.68 annual saves. Despite the potential difficulties with this finding, the relief pitchers were being paid on the results of their individual performance statistics.

To summarize my findings: (a) noncentral players were paid more than central players; (b) players were rewarded for their power and speed; (c) the highest paid playing positions were outfield, designated hitter, and first base, four of the five were noncentral positions, accounting for the traditional hitting positions; (d) black players were the highest paid racial group; (e) experience, race, and centrality had a negative
relationship to salary; (f) starting pitchers were the highest paid position in baseball, while relief pitchers were paid the most per appearance; (g) white players were underrepresented at more positions than blacks or Hispanics; (h) minorities were underrepresented at both pitching positions; and (i) players and pitchers appeared to be rewarded according to individual performance, as asserted by Blalock (1962) and supported by Scully (1974b).

Discussion

The two most surprising findings in my sample of elite were the negative relationship experience had with salary and the slightly moderate correlation of batting average to wages. Both variables would appear to be highly rewardable commodities within the profession, as each could be measured as a leading indicator of individual performance. However, for baseball management this may not be the case. A player's experience may be discounted as 'being past his prime', while consistent hitting, without run production or power, may simply not be enough to overcome other objections. As examples for my interpretation, I will offer two cases studies of white players in central positions.

Carlton Fisk, currently the second oldest Major Leaguer at 45, has been a professional catcher for the past twenty-one years. Prior to the opening pitch of the 1993 season, Fisk was twenty-five games short of capturing the all-time record for games played as a catcher, 2,225. He already owns the record for most number of home runs hit by a catcher. At the end of the 1991 season, Fisk had hit 372 home
runs, an average of 18.6 per year. He also averaged 65.25 runs batted in, along with scoring an average of 63.1 runs per season. Jerry Reinsdorf, owner of the Chicago White Sox, recalled his team’s urgency to sign Fisk to a 1981 contract.

Signing Carlton at that time was incredibly important because the White Sox were the Rodney Dangerfield of baseball. When Fisk became a free agent, none of our fans thought we could sign a premier player like that. We were able to pull that off, and it immediately created credibility. (Nightingale, 1993, p. 10)

Reinsdorf’s personal triumph in signing Fisk signaled a new era for White Sox’ baseball; they instantly became legitimate contenders in the pursuit of Major League profits and recognition. Two years later the White Sox won their first divisional crown in twenty-four years. In 1993, after a dozen years of Fisk’s services, Reinsdorf’s opinion of the catcher who brought instant credibility to his team changed.

Look, Carlton and I agree about a lot of things, like he thinks he’s great and I think he’s great. We signed him mainly because he’s the second-best catcher in our organization. We wouldn’t have signed him if it was going to make a farce of things. (Nightingale, 1993, pp. 10-11)

From premier player to backup backstop, Fisk’s role change has been demonstrated in his salary level over the past three seasons. The all-star catcher went from $2.1 million per season in 1991 to $1.35 million in 1992, and to $650,000 in 1993. (Nightingale, 1993) His fifty-two percent cut in salary from 1992 to 1993 was largely made because of the team’s desire to sign starting pitcher Jack McDowell, a four year veteran who won a $4 million salary arbitration case. Reinsdorf rationalized Fisk’s pay cut by discounting the catcher’s prior contributions to his organization.

How many years can you overpay him? He was entitled to have a year (1991) when he got paid more than he produced but not two years. . . . I hope
Pudge’s [Fisk] ’93 season is good enough so that I’ll want to negotiate a 1994 White Sox contract with him. (Nightingale, 1993, pp. 10-12)

Called the "ultimate professional" by former manager Jim Fregosi (Nightingale, 1993, p. 12), Fisk clearly realized his experience and certain Hall of Fame performance statistics had been interpreted by White Sox management as old age.

Everything they use as a liability is my age and year after year I’ve proven that age isn’t a factor. One year age is going to be a factor. Those people who said it was are finally going to be right. (Muskat, 1993, p. 6)

Ultimately, Reinsdorf exchanged Fisk’s experience for McDowell’s youth.

Wade Boggs, the five-time American League batting champion, was the Boston Red Sox starting third baseman for eleven consecutive seasons. Over that period he helped the Red Sox win three divisional crowns, one pennant, and a trip to the 1986 World Series. Boggs, one of the game’s most proficient hitters with a career batting average of .338, discovered that his hitting consistency was not enough incentive for Boston’s management to sign him for a twelfth season. On December 15, 1992 Boggs inked a two-year, free agent deal with New York, as the Red Sox refused to match the Yankees’ offer.

In the end, Boggs’ free-agent exit to the Yankees was met with little reaction from his former teammates. A Boston newspaper conducted an informal poll that revealed most Boston players were glad Boggs was gone. (Pascarelli, 1993, p. S-8)

Although Boggs had seven seasons where he collected 200 or more hits, he hit few home runs, 7.7 per season, and stole even fewer bases, less than two per year. Despite averaging 97 runs scored and 62 runs batted in for each of his eleven Boston
seasons, Boggs was not considered a run-producer. More important, he was not well-liked.

Boggs was not revered in Boston to the extent that icons such as Yaz or Larry Bird were idolized. Boggs' public scandal involving Margo Adams didn't help his image. He has not been the kind of big home run or RBI man who is irreplaceable and some questions remain whether Boggs, who turned down a two-year, $9.2 million contract before the 1992 season, was a real team player. (Pascarelli, 1993, p. S-8)

Beside the Margo Adams incident, which Boggs claimed was a constant distraction for his 1992 season, he cited his vision loss as a major contributor to his poor .259 showing at the plate, a figure well below his career mark, rather than a lack of commitment to the team, "One of the surprises was finding out that my vision had gone from 20 - 10 to 20 - 20. I had trouble recognizing fork balls and reading the rotation on the pitches." (O'Connell, 1993, p. 29)

However, his teammates felt Boggs' behavior was more responsible for his downfall in Boston than his worst hitting year in the Majors.

Boggs got on the wrong side of his teammates last September when he lobbied to have an error that had been charged to him changed to a hit, which would have cost Roger Clemens two earned runs. (Giuliotti, 1993, p. 29)

Roger Clemens, Boston's pitching ace, said prior to the start of the 1993 season, "We had a few guys who didn't want to be here and they were miserable playing here. So it was best for them to move on." (Pascarelli, 1993, p. S-8)

Presumably, Clemens included Boggs on his list.

For 1993 Boggs was replaced on the Red Sox roster by Scott Cooper, a white, young prospect, who, in 1992, hit five home runs, drove in 33 runs, scored 34 runs,
and stole one base in his first full season with Boston. Cooper’s performance was not of Boggs-like quality, but he had one major factor in his favor; the ballplayers liked him.

Scott Cooper was sitting quietly in the St. Petersburg, Fla., dugout when a St. Louis TV station requested an interview. Cooper is from St. Louis, so the station’s wanting an interview was not surprising. However, when Cooper’s teammates heard the request, they started kidding the young Red Sox third baseman. . . . Cooper is a popular interview this spring. Not for hitting .276 in 123 games for the Red Sox in 1992. . . But for being the player who is being asked to replace Wade Boggs. (Pascarelli, 1993, p. S-8)

Eventually, Boggs’ hitting consistency could not overcome Cooper’s popularity. What the Boggs and Fisk episodes revealed was that batting average and experience were secondary considerations for salary, as power and speed were the primary performance qualities baseball management desired, even for white, central position players, and that pitchers were more important than either.

Prior to the 1991 season, a black, noncentral position player exchanged the bright lights of the Big Apple for greener pastures and Dodger blue. When rightfielder Darryl Strawberry went West, the Mets’ 1983 Rookie of the Year took his 252 home runs, an average of 31.5 per season, 733 runs batted in, 91.6 per year, and 191 stolen bases, 23.9 per season, with him to Los Angeles. During Strawberry’s eight-year stay with the Mets, the team won the National League pennant twice, captured the 1986 World Series, and finished second five times. Since his departure the Mets have struggled, as Strawberry’s loss ushered in a new age for the club.

It was the end of an era for New York baseball, as it was when Reggie Jackson left the Yankees nine years ago. It was an era that began when the Mets selected Strawberry first in the nation in the amateur draft in 1980 when
he was an 18-year-old senior at Crenshaw High School in Los Angeles and already a celebrated prospect with a storybook name. (Durso, 1990a, p. A1)

What began as a match made in heaven soured a decade later when Strawberry rejected a $15.5 million, four-year deal from the Mets and signed for $20.5 million over five years with the Dodgers. The powerful clean-up hitter said he left because the Mets did not recognize his individual accomplishments.

I think the New York Mets handled a lot of things wrong in my case. They didn’t really show the kind of appreciation that I was really expecting from them. They were very negative toward me in the middle part of the season, which was a very critical part. We were in the middle of a pennant race and there they were talking contract. (Lev, 1990, pp. A27-A28)

For the Dodgers, Strawberry was projected as the messianic power hitter who would lead them to the playoff promised land. Fred Clair, the Dodgers' executive vice president, said of Strawberry, "His best years are ahead of him. He’s a premier player who can lead the Dodgers into the 1990s." (Durso, 1990a, p. A28) Upon hearing the news of Strawberry’s acquisition, Tommy Lasorda, the Los Angeles manager, said, "I couldn’t sleep. I was so excited." (Durso, 1990a, p. A28) Lasorda labeled Strawberry as the type of player "that can literally carry a ball club." (Anderson, 1990, p. A27) In short, Strawberry’s power had the Dodgers salivating.

For the Mets, they were faced with the task of replenishing Strawberry’s run production. Frank Cashen, the Mets general manager, considered only two alternatives; power or speed.

We might change the way we put our outfield together. We might take a year or two to get it done completely. We might look for a little more speed and not rely as much on the home run, put together the offense a little differently. (Chass, 1990, p. A27)
Cashen chose speed and signed Vince Coleman to a four-year, $12 million deal, and said he expected the black, fleet-footed centerfielder to "put the fans on the edge of their seats." (Durso, 1990b, p. D23). Cashen's excitement was based on Coleman's ability to run the base paths, as the former Cardinal averaged 91.5 stolen bases each season over his six-year career. In 1991, the Mets began a new era by replacing Strawberry's power with Coleman's speed.

For starting pitchers, a position in centrality limbo, speed and power take on different connotations. For my elite pitchers these qualities translated to earned run average, the ability to limit opposition scoring, and complete games, possessing the strength and control to go the distance. In 1991, the epitome of these characteristics was Roger "The Rocket" Clemens, who became the first player to surpass the $5 million mark per season by renewing a contract with the Boston Red Sox worth $21.5 million over a four-year period.

At the time Clemens had posted a lifetime earned run average of 2.85 and had averaged 9.75 complete games each season over his eight-year career. He was named the league's Most Valuable Player and was twice acknowledged as the league's best pitcher, winning the Cy Young Award in 1986 and 1987. Clemens, a white righthander, had won nearly 70% of the games he started, and was Boston's all-time strikeout leader. Lou Gorman, the Red Sox general manager, understood Clemens' individual contribution to the team.

Roger is obviously a very important member of this ballclub, and this [the contract] is a big step toward keeping the Red Sox winning over the next five
years. He is not only one of the best pitchers in Red Sox history, but the premier pitcher in baseball today. (Chass, 1991, p. 45)

Shortly following Clemens' contract extension, the New York Mets offered their pitching star, Dwight Gooden, a three-year deal which made the hard-throwing righthander baseball's second-highest paid player, and the only other player besides Clemens to exceed the $5 million mark per season. Gooden's career statistics were similar to those of Clemens. The black fastballer had a lifetime earned run average of 2.91 and averaged 7.13 complete games per season over his eight-year career. Gooden had won 72% of the games he started and was awarded the Cy Young in his second year. According to Al Harazin, the executive vice president of the Mets, Gooden was the crucial individual, the one most responsible for any future success the team might have.

He is the heart and soul of the club. And that's not an idle line. It's how people in our clubhouse feel. It's a unique contract for a unique player. (Sexton, 1991b, p. A1)

David Cone, a former teammate of Gooden's and starter for the Mets, felt retaining Gooden was a solid fiscal investment for the Mets management.

Pick the adjective, although probably none of them will be sufficient. What he has meant to this organization you can't begin to calculate. He's been a cornerstone of the escalating success and profits the club has enjoyed for almost a decade. (Sexton, 1991a, p. C5)

The earned run averages and complete games of Clemens and Gooden were irreplaceable for their respective teams, valuable individual performances at a position which centrality neglected.
Conclusion

My presentation of the brief life experiences of Fisk, Boggs, Strawberry, Clemens, and Gooden served two purposes; (1) to verify the findings of my elite sample, and (2) to provide some insight to the almost absent roles that race and centrality of position played in salary construction. The players were rewarded for their run-producing performances, rather than their race or their field location. The pitchers were compensated for their ability to keep the other teams as scoreless as possible, for their stamina in this pursuit, and were described as most central.

If we agree that, among the multiple ways of acknowledging achievement in rewarding individuals, the level of monetary enumeration is a primary sign of importance to the organization, then we can also agree that, for baseball, the most important, or central, positions are the highest rewarded ones; namely pitcher, outfielder, designated hitter, and first base. If we cannot agree with this premise, then we must admit that Loy and McElvogue (1970), the constructors of the centrality concept, know more about the business of baseball than baseball players and management. If this was the case, then, we could have objectively expected infield positions and white players to have been the most rewarded. For my sample of elites this was obviously not true, as only one of their central positions, first base, was found in the top six of the highest paid positions, and black players outearned, and outperformed, white players. I could find no evidence that economic discrimination toward minorities was present within my sample of baseball’s elites. However, I do believe I have
uncovered indications that the construction of centrality was flawed; based on a biased and empty variable, which, in turn, twisted the definition and location of interaction for baseball. This means a critique of centrality is necessary, and it shall begin by recalling Blalock (1962) and Grusky (1963).
CHAPTER III

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF CENTRALITY

Considering that "the empirical world of our discipline is the natural social world of every-day experience", Herbert Blumer (1954, p. 7) found much to be wrong with social theory. Blumer observed theory as divorced from the empirical world, defective in its research methods, and too reliant on the assimilation of 'facts' which held little relevance for everyday situations, and lacking in conceptualization.

Theory is of value in empirical science only to the extent to which it connects fruitfully with the empirical world. Concepts are the means, and the only means of establishing such connection, for it is the concept that points to the empirical instances about which a theoretical proposal is made. If the concept is clear as to what it refers, then sure identification of the empirical instances may be made. (Blumer, 1954, p. 4)

Here Blumer explicitly determined that a theory's construct must contain concepts which are not only concisely defined, but must also possess a direct connection to the everyday social practices which the theory intends to measure, describe, and explain. If the theory fails to present lucid and relative concepts, then, according to Blumer, its effectiveness is greatly diminished as it only vaguely refers to the life experience it hopes to capture.

Contrariwise, vague concepts deter the identification of appropriate empirical instances, and obscure the detection of what is relevant in the empirical instances that are chosen. Thus, they block connection between theory and its empirical world and prevent their effective interplay. (Blumer, 1954, p. 5)
Thus, Blumer felt vague concepts, those ambiguous in both definition and association with reality, were the detrimental factors of theoretical construction. He suggested to insure that a theory's notions were both clear and relative, its positioning must move from a purely objective stance to a more integrated approach; one which included aspects of relativism directly incorporated from the everyday situations being studied.

It is accomplished instead by exposition which yields a meaningful picture, abetted by apt illustrations which enable one to grasp the reference in terms of one's own experience. This is how we come to see meaning and sense in our concepts. (Blumer, 1954, p. 9)

Blumer further detailed his notion of "meaningful pictures" by accentuating the role of the actor in social situations.

The research scholar who is concerned with the social action of a given individual or group, or with a given type of social action, must see that action from the position of whoever is forming the action. He should trace the formulation of the action in the way in which it is actually formed. This means seeing the situation as it is seen by the actor. (Blumer, 1969, p. 56)

This procedure is to approach the study of group activity through the eyes and experience of the people who have developed the activity. Hence, it necessarily requires an intimate familiarity with this experience and with the scenes of its operation. (Blumer, 1969, p. 139)

Three decades later Blumer's "apt illustrations" and "meaningful pictures" evolved into Norman Denzin's "life experiences" and "interpretive interactionism". Denzin developed his perspective through a critical extension of symbolic interactionism blended with Sartreian existentialism; a system which also viewed the role of the active participant as vital to method and, of course, theoretical concepts.
Interpretive interactionism assumes that every human being is a universal singular. No individual is ever just an individual. He or she must be studied as a single instance of more universal social experiences and social processes... Interpretive interactionism aims, as much as possible, for a concept-free mode of discourse and expression. Its mode of expression is locked into the first-order, primary, lived concepts of everyday life. (Denzin, 1989, pp. 19,25)

With regards to centrality, I have found neither illustrations nor experiences present in centrality, apt or otherwise. Furthermore I thought its concepts were vague in definition and weak in meaning for the social interpretation of baseball. What disturbed me included; the construction of centrality from a purely defensive posture; the classification of central positions as the "brain" (Loy & McElvogue, 1970) and "thinking" (Lapchick & Stuckey, 1991) positions, suggesting these carried more responsibility; the negative status of the pitching position; the labeling of the playing field as a "social structure" (Loy & McElvogue, 1970); the lack of distinctiveness in Grusky’s (1963) definition of dependent and independent tasks, the forerunner to Loy and McElvogue’s equally inexplicit explanation of "interaction"; and the misappropriation of Blalock’s (1962) work. Throughout this chapter and the next, I will address these issues and others by revisiting the construction of centrality and applying ‘Blumer-like illustrations’ and ‘Denzin-ish experiences’ to the theory’s margins in hopes of revealing a more complete understanding of what is socially and racially central to baseball.

First, I begin with Blalock’s (1962) work on organizational discrimination in baseball. My purpose is to uncover Blalock’s overall intention as to how his propositions were to be used, and why he concluded that discrimination was unlikely to be
found in professional baseball, a deduction disregarded by Loy and McElvogue. Then I will examine Grusky's (1963) structural formation, the original pattern for centrality. Finally, in the next chapter, I will detail Loy and McElvogue.

Blalock Revisited

Blalock's first and fourth propositions were somewhat interrelated, as both showcased the negative correlation of individual performance to the potential level of racial discrimination within the organization. Blalock theorized the higher the significance of individual performance the lower the likelihood of racial discrimination.

1. The greater the importance of high individual performance to the productivity of the work group, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by employers.

4. To the degree that high individual performance works to the advantage of other members of the work group who share rewards of high performance, the higher the positive correlation between performance and status within the group, and the lower the degree of minority discrimination by group members. (Blalock, 1962, p. 245)

The value of individual performance to the baseball organizations was presented through the Strawberry, Clemens, and Gooden experiences from the previous chapter. However, to further illustrate this point, I offer two more examples involving black, noncentral players.

Tom Kelly, the Minnesota Twins' manager, determined the signing of nine-year veteran centerfielder Kirby Puckett was imperative for his team, "If he [Puckett] leaves, the general manager has to leave, because he didn't sign him. He'd have to leave. They'd blow his house up." (Knobler, 1993, p. B14) The value of the club's
number-three hitter and perennial all-star was critical enough for the Twins to readjust their entire team’s salary structure and philosophy.

To keep Puckett in Minnesota, the Twins gave him $30 million over the next five years. Since general manager Andy MacPhail says Minnesota’s entire yearly payroll must stay under $30 million, Puckett will represent about 20-25 percent of that for the length of his contract. . . . MacPhail said he has already been more careful in offering multi-year contracts to other players. He committed to Puckett, but he doesn’t want to commit to a full team. (Knobler, 1993, p. B14)

Toronto was faced with an identical situation in evaluating the worth of their power-hitting rightfielder, Joe Carter. Pat Gillick, the Blue Jays’ general manager, decided that keeping Carter was essential.

He was our No. 1 priority in the offseason. If we hadn’t resigned him, we would have needed more offense, more power to compete. It would have changed our approach to pursuing guys like (Paul) Molitor and (Dave) Stewart. Instead we would have had to find a big bat to replace Joe. (Wendel, 1993, p. 4)

The examples of Puckett and Carter provide insight into Blalock’s first and fourth propositions. In short, individual performances which are capable of providing the members of an organization with the promise of a reward are likely to override discrimination attempts.

To an extent, validation for Blalock’s second proposition was also found within the Puckett, Carter, Strawberry, Clemens, and Gooden cases, as these signings were the direct result of intense competition among organizations. That is, the higher the degree of competition for personnel, the lower the potential for discrimination.

2. The greater the competition among employers for persons with high performance levels, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by employers. (Blalock, 1993, p. 245)
Further evidence to indicate that competition for players has intensified was revealed by the increased percentage of salary costs in relation to the total operating revenue for the teams, along with the decline of profits for the profession.

Players got about half the income of the 26 major league baseball teams this year, up from 30 percent in 1989, according to management figures obtained by the Associated Press. Operating profits of the teams declined by 56 percent in 1991 to $99 million, according to the figures, which show the commissioner's office estimates the teams will break even for 1992. (Associated Press, 1992, p. C2)

As Table 9 displayed, from 1983 to 1992 operating revenues increased by 215%, while total expenses rose at a slower rate, 179%, for the same period. However, the average player's salary grew 356% over this ten-year period, a higher ratio than the decade's revenue climb. This salary increase accounted for 49.5% of operating revenues in 1992 compared to 41.2% in 1991, 33.7% in 1990, and 29.8% in 1989. In 1992, fifty-eight free agents agreed to contracts worth $400,625,000. (Associated Press, 1992) As I noted in the previous chapter, minority players appeared to get their fair share of these salary increases.

Blalock's third proposition was probably the most pertinent concerning the relationship of individual performance to organizational discrimination.

3. The easier it is accurately to evaluate an individual's performance level, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by employers. (Blalock, 1962, p. 245)

Here Blalock revealed the difficulty baseball would encounter in disguising discriminating practices, as the players' performance statistics are readily available in mainstream publications for scrutiny by fans and skeptics alike. For decades Sunday
Table 9
Comparison of Operating Revenues, Operating Expenses, Average Player Salaries, and Profit (Loss) for Major League Baseball, 1983 - 1992

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<td>$ 521,656</td>
<td>$ 588,259</td>
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editions of most newspapers have presented weekly statistical portraits of players and teams as a feature of their sport sections. These provide performance characteristics for hitters and pitchers, while inviting comparisons across individuals, clubs, and leagues. More detailed statistical accounts have also been available in specialized national sporting publications and yearly annuals. Once racial and salary data are collected, positional segregation and economic discrimination investigations are easily organized and completed. In short, when compared to other sports and professions, such as football and politics, baseball is an open book waiting to be read due to the game’s nature.

Because baseball is a one-thing-at-a-time game, and therefore full of things easy to count. A batter’s or pitcher’s or fielder’s record depends much more on his individual action, easily observed and unambiguous in its result, to a much greater degree than anything done in football (where 22 men move simultaneously) or the continuous-flow games (basketball, hockey, soccer). . . It’s easier to assign responsibility for the outcome of a particular play to a single player in baseball than in other team games. (Koppett, 1991, p. 226)

The fifth of Blalock’s thirteen propositions revolved around the player’s personal freedom on the field; less restrictions translate into less discrimination.

5. The fewer the restrictions placed on performance by members of the work group, the lower the degree of minority discrimination. (Restrictions reduce the minority member’s advantage with respect to performance.) (Blalock, 1962, p. 245)

Bobby Bonds, a black outfielder with the San Francisco Giants, has experienced little in the way of work restrictions. To the contrary, he has found his freedom on the playing field.

I feel free when I’m on the baseball field. It’s the only place nobody can bother me. It’s the only place I feel I can be anybody I want. I feel no one
can touch me. . . . It's the only time I feel at peace with my God. It's where I feel I have the most power, and it's a good power. (Rains, 1993b, p. 37)

Blauf's sixth proposition captured the positional assignment of the game itself; that players occupy certain roles and perform within them.

6. To the degree that a work group consists of a number of specialists interacting as a team and that there is little or no serious competition among these members, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by group members. (Blauf, 1962, p. 245)

In the thirty-something years since Blauf penned this proposition, baseball has become even more specialized with an array of 'role players'; individuals with specific assignments for specific situations. The profession has given us the pinch runner, the pinch hitter, the designated hitter, the long reliever, the middle reliever, the closer, batters who face certain pitchers, pitchers who face select batters, and late-inning defensive replacements. Even the starting pitcher has attained an exclusive role, "After 100 pitches -- about the seventh inning -- out they come, regardless of the score. The starter is fast becoming merely the first setup man for the closer." (Holway, 1993, p. 5)

The game's tendency for specialization was punctuated by Nolan Ryan, the hard-throwing righthander for the Texas Rangers, when he defined his role, "My job is to keep my team in the game. I'm not responsible for what happens after I leave the game." (Holway, 1993, p. 5) Greg Maddux, the 1992 National League Cy Young winner, echoed Ryan's sentiment, "I try not to get too caught up in how the team's playing or how they're going to be playing. I just worry about doing my part of it." (Snyder, 1993a, p. 6) Thus, it would appear, performance qualities, rather
than social or personal traits, are organizational priorities when evaluating a player. As I noted earlier, factors like speed, power, and run production or prevention seemed to be primary in the examples of Puckett, Carter, Strawberry, Clemens, and Gooden. Blalock aptly determined that an emphasis on individual performance created a working environment which enjoyed little in-house competition due to specialization, rather than an interactional social setting where performance was defined by coordinated group effort.

Blalock's seventh proposition was closely related to his sixth; the more competition for positions originates outside the team, the less opportunity for discrimination.

7. To the degree that a group member's position is threatened by anonymous outsiders rather than other members of his own group, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by group members. (Blalock, 1962, p. 245)

Because of the importance of individual performance and the preponderance of specialized roles in baseball, competition for players is most likely to originate from players on other teams, especially those who have attained free agency status, instead of teammates. Therefore, within a team of specialists, racial discrimination is less likely to be a concern than in group-oriented occupational settings. The lack of this concern was embodied through an interview with Strawberry.

Q. The Mets seem to be slow in putting more black players on the team. They had you [Strawberry], and Gooden and Daryl Boston. Did this bother you?

A. It never fazed me. I never thought about it. Guys I played with were great guys. That's the most important thing in my life. Being around people who are your friends and have respect for you. That's what I dealt with. I
didn’t look around and say, 'Well, this is a shame we only have three black players.' I looked at the players I played with and I loved and cared for the years I was there. They were very important to me in a very important part of my life. (Stevenson, 1990, p. B14)

Proposition eight also centered around individual performance and the lack of power over others.

8. To the extent that an individual’s success depends primarily on his own performance, rather than on limiting or restricting the performance of specific other individuals, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by group members. (Blalock, 1962, p. 245)

Frank Thomas, the slugging, black, first baseman of the Chicago White Sox, explained his success was dependent on his ability to hit the ball and to stay within himself, rather than imposing limits on another.

I’ve hit the ball the last eight years of my life. I’m getting better as a hitter, and I don’t think that’s going to change. I’m a confident hitter and I know what I can do. It gets to the point where it’s skill more than luck. (Snyder, 1993b, p. 5)

The point Thomas made, that he felt solely responsible for his success, is intensified when a player is not performing well. Such was the case for the Detroit Tigers’ rookie relief pitcher Greg Gohr. Gohr, a white righthander, faced the prospect of being released, not because of failing to exercise authority over others, but because his performance was disappointing. For Gohr, or any player, his performance evaluation could change over the course of an inning.

Pitchers Greg Gohr and Mike Munoz, both relievers, are both expendable. Both pitched Monday, and while Munoz got the one batter he faced, Gohr did nothing to help his case. Gohr faced six batters and walked three of them, one intentionally. He worked one inning and allowed one earned run, actually lowering his ERA from 33.75 to 23.14. Gohr, a rookie, has been rocked in
his early appearances in the majors and could benefit from regular work in the minors. (Roberts, 1993b, p. C3)

Blalock’s ninth, an extension of his eighth, focused on the relationship between performance and hierarchial power.

9. To the degree that high performance does not lead to power over other members of the work group, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by group members. (Blalock, 1962, p. 245)

Although baseball is competitive across teams, there is little concrete structural configuration within teams for the players. Blalock (1962, p. 243) noted, "There is no major hierarchy of positions such that if the top man is removed, every other person moves up one notch." In short, a player’s performance will surely impact on his success, but will not provide him with authority over others. He is not in charge of anyone or any group. His power is autonomous and somewhat arbitrary. According to Wade Boggs (Pedulla, 1993, p. 14), if stellar performance does not bring expected rewards, a feeling of personal powerlessness can emerge, "Baseball is the only sport where you can do everything 100 percent right and still fail."

The power a player has is largely due to the establishment of free agency. After six years of Major League service a player earns the right to negotiate with any team in baseball. Although a player is restricted by the number of organizations he can offer his services to, he can regularly change work environments. Free agency, an answer to Blalock’s tenth proposition, makes managerial discrimination more difficult to ordain.
10. To the degree that group members find it difficult or disadvantageous to change jobs in order to avoid minority members, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by employers. (Blalock, 1962, p. 245-246)

Perhaps, for baseball, financial dominion is the only control which management can exert over players in an age of free agency. For example, Carter selected his team not strictly through financial considerations, but via his dreams, a realm where employer influence is at a minimum. Carter received offers from both the Toronto Blue Jays and the Kansas City Royals, with the latter offering him an opportunity to play near his home and stronger financial incentives. Yet, Carter chose to remain with Toronto because of his unconscious imagery.

In the first, Carter saw himself carrying a basketball, his favorite sport as a kid, and walking with Blue Jays center fielder Devon White to the SkyDome. . . . In the next dream, Carter saw himself playing right field for Toronto, wearing a Blue Jay uniform. Off to his right stood White, Toronto’s regular center fielder. To further drive home the point, Carter saw blue birds - Blue Jays - flying around in the background. (Wendel, 1993, p. 4)

In Carter’s case, Royal’s general manager Herk Robinson summed the amount of control management has in attracting and maintaining players, "Financially, I knew we were close. Emotionally how close? I don’t know." (Wendel, 1993, p. 4) Here, emotional freedom remained the personal property of the player.

Blalock’s eleventh proposition also centered around the issue of individual freedom, namely the ability to develop the profession’s mandatory talents.

11. To the extent that it is difficult to prevent the minority from acquiring the necessary skills for high performance, the lower the degree of discrimination. This is especially likely when: (a) skill depends primarily on innate abilities, (b) skill can be developed without prolonged or expensive training, or (c) it is difficult to maintain a monopoly of skills through secrecy or the control of facilities. (Blalock, 1962, p. 246)
We return to Carter again for an illustration of this proposition. He began the development of his talents, as most youngsters do, simply by playing, although without the usual equipment associated with the game.

He [Carter] and two brothers, Larry and Fred, used to drag a 36-ounce bat out to their father’s pear tree in the backyard and take turns swinging at thrown fruit. . . . It wasn’t long before Carter was driving baseballs more than 375 feet into the trailer park beyond the Millwood High School property line. (Wendel, 1993, p. 4)

The twelfth of Blalock’s thirteen propositions reflected the game’s structure and nature; individual performances in pursuing the elusive ball.

12. To the extent that performance level is relatively independent of skill in interpersonal relations, the lower the degree of discrimination. (Lower discrimination is predicted where one works with things rather than where one works with or manipulates persons.) (Blalock, 1962, p. 246)

The independence of performance in baseball, to which Blalock referred, is punctuated by the fact that players do not block, screen, pick, clear out, body check, or advance the ball to teammates as in other major team sports such as football, basketball, hockey, soccer, and lacrosse.

Concerning the character of performance, baseball has traditionally been much closer to team tennis, golf, or volleyball, also one-thing-at-a-time games, than the above more interactive team sports. In these, like baseball, the ball, not another player, is the intensive object of attention. Baseball players do not ‘guard’ anyone like participants in other major team sports, as they play the ball and the situation rather than the opposition. We will examine this factor at greater length in a later chapter.
Blalock's thirteenth and final proposition correlated the relationship of social interaction with discrimination.

13. The lower the degree of purely social interaction on the job (especially interaction involving both sexes), the lower the degree of discrimination. (Blalock, 1962, p. 246)

There, of course, is no social interaction among genders on the baseball field, so the probability of discrimination is decreased for baseball when compared to more mainstream professions. Additionally, because of free agency and various roster moves, there may be little interaction among players themselves as indicated by Andy Van Slyke, a white outfielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates, "I still wouldn't know some of our guys if I ran into them in the mall." (Roberts & Knobler, 1993, p. B2)

In a notation to his proposition, Blalock asserted that if high levels of social interaction existed minority performances would eventually suffer.

NOTE: A high degree of social interaction may not only result in the minority member feeling left out and desiring to leave the job, but it may also affect his performance. (Blalock, 1962, p. 246)

As we have witnessed in the previous chapter the minority members of the baseball elites performed at an equal or higher level than their white counterparts, and were paid in relation to their performance. With no minority performance decline, Blalock's contention that there was little social interaction on the playing field appears to ring true three decades later.

It should become obvious to us by now that Blalock considered the importance of individual performance as a prioritizing element in determining the existence of racial discrimination for a profession. For Blalock, an occupation which had little
demand for social interaction and one which placed little emphasis on restricting performance was not a revolutionary model for epidemic discriminatory practices. As my previous illustrations revealed, baseball fits this description; an arena of little interaction and limitations on performance.

In his evaluation of baseball, which preceded the formation of the centrality theory, Blalock, possibly inadvertently, revealed the positions that were central to the game's overall popularity and success.

No matter how envious they may be, players must outwardly show respect for the batting or pitching star. His performance yields him high status; the higher the productivity, the higher his prestige. This is in marked contrast to situations in which norms develop which regulate output, thereby equalizing the performances of all members and reducing the importance of individual differences in skill. (Blalock, 1962, p. 242-243)

Yet, as we shall discover, the centrality theorists showed little "respect for the batting or pitching star" hailed by Blalock as the game's operative positions. This lack of recognition toward these positions, by the centrality theorists, led to a conceptual error which mislocated and misrepresented baseball's interactional content.

What can we make of Loy and McElvogue's use of Blalock's occupational discrimination work? To answer this in a definitive manner would be pure speculation on my part, as Loy and McElvogue failed to provide an explanation for their choice of Blalock's following propositions.

1. The lower the degree of purely social interaction on the job..., the lower the degree of discrimination. [Proposition 13, without the reference to gender.]

2. To the extent that performance level is relatively independent of skill in interpersonal relations, the lower the degree of discrimination. [Proposition 12, without the reference to working with things rather than people.]
3. To the extent that an individual's success depends primarily on his own performance, rather than on limiting or restricting the performance of specific other individuals, the lower the degree of discrimination by group members. [Proposition 8.] (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 7)

As we have observed, Blalock felt that individual performance was prevalent in baseball, and that restrictions to gaining skills and performance were limited in the profession, thereby leaving little room for racial discrimination on the baseball field. Yet, Loy and McElvogue apparently interpreted these concepts differently. By basing their thesis on the second and third propositions, Loy and McElvogue arrived at a disparate, and, arguably, confusing hypothesis.

... the combined consideration of propositions 2 and 3 suggested that there will be less discrimination where performance of independent tasks are largely involved; because such tasks do not have to be coordinated with the activities of other persons, and therefore do not hinder the performance of others, nor require a great deal of skill in interpersonal relations. ... we subsumed his three propositions under a more general one, stating that: "discrimination is positively related to centrality." (Loy and McElvogue, 1970, p. 7).

Their passage does not explain why they selected these particular propositions in formulating their hypothesis. Apparently, in order to reach their conclusion, they perceived baseball as a game of interactional activity which restricted the performances of minorities. A conclusion which was contrary to Blalock's determination and vaguely assembled from a purely objective methodology and defensive-oriented grasp of the game. However, if we were to arbitrarily pick and choose from Blalock's propositions, I argue that, of all, the most strikingly direct one was his third.

3. The easier it is accurately to evaluate an individual's performance level, the lower the degree of minority discrimination by employers. (Blalock, 1962, p. 245)
As we have already discussed, these performance statistics are relatively available and have been so for decades. In addition, the press has had access to the players. Both make it difficult to hide discriminatory practices on the field. But another factor enters the conceptual argument through this proposition; the sheer availability of these performance statistics suggest that performance is the key element to professional success for both players and employers, rather than some abstracted form of interaction.

If we were to choose among Blalock's propositions for discrimination studies in baseball, his third should be included for a fair evaluation as it remains his most powerful.

For whatever reason, Loy and McElvogue ignored the third and instead chose three which they apparently felt related to Grusky's (1963) concept of dependent task as interaction. Then they linked these, through a racial headcount of most positions, to a positive relationship between discrimination and their perception of centrality; a structural assignment which overlooked the roles of the pitcher and the batter.

Grusky Revisited

Grusky, as noted in Chapter I, determined there were two types of tasks relevant to baseball; independent and dependent. Although he did not provide a definition for dependent tasks, he identified independent tasks as "the kind performed without the necessity of coordination with the activities of other positions." (Grusky, 1963, p. 346) Therefore, for our purposes, we must assume that dependent tasks
involved a coordination with other positions. For Grusky, and later for Loy and McElvogue, the undefined concept of dependent tasks became translated into and accorded the privilege of interaction.

Centrality, according to Grusky (1963, p. 346), was directly related to spatial location, "In accordance with the formulations of Bavelas (1950) and Leavitt (1951), central positions are defined as those located close to other positions." Loy and McElvogue embraced Grusky's criteria of dependent tasks and its frequency of occurrence, and spatial location of positions, and immersed them with Hopkins' (1964) definition of centrality in constructing their conceptual framework. For us, it becomes obvious that Grusky's work was crucial to Loy and McElvogue's theory and the twenty-plus years of discrimination investigations of professional baseball.

Yet a conceptual evaluation of Grusky's criteria, especially from an interactionist's position, raises certain problematic inquiries; namely the designated categorization of the pitching position and the ambiguous nature of the dependent task and its transposition into interaction.

We might think that Grusky's concepts of centrality and interaction suggested that the pitching position should be considered the most central of all positions, due to its location; one close to other positions and central to the game's activity, and its constant requirement to perform in tandem with occupants of other positions of both teams; his catcher and fielders and the opposition's batters and base runners. It would seem the pitcher's coordination is both offensive and defensive in character and performed at a greater frequency than any other position, making the pitching position
the one with the most number of tasks and, quite possibly, the greatest share of responsibilities. Grusky wrote:

All else being equal, the more central one’s spatial location: (1) the greater the likelihood dependent or coordinative tasks will be performed and (2) the greater the rate of interaction with the occupants of other positions. Also, performance of dependent tasks is positively related to frequency of interaction. (Grusky, 1963, p. 346)

However, despite his description which could be interpreted as operative of the pitching position, Grusky discounted the pitcher as central to baseball.

Two factors are relevant to the classification of the pitcher. First, like the outfielders, his functions are primarily independent. It is not his abilities in team-play that are critical to his success. His offensive tasks are considered of minor importance and are generally of a dependent nature. Second, despite a central location, his interaction rate is severely limited by the fact that he participates in only about one game in four, unless he is a relief pitcher. In the latter case, he typically performs only for a few innings. (Grusky, 1963, p. 349)

Here Grusky’s conceptual assertions were clearly lacking and empirically short-sighted. The pitching position is easily of more importance to baseball than the field positions as it is the originator of each action which occurs on the field. In contrast a fielder can play an entire game without being involved in any activity, other than batting and base running. The game itself is dependent upon the pitching position, a performance critical to both individual and team success; a ranking supported by the pitcher’s lofty status as the highest paid position and the fact that he is exclusively credited with winning, losing, or saving the game. In an interpretive sense, the pitcher is the author of the baseball text, while the remaining positions are characters in his narrative.
Grusky’s conception of the pitcher’s offensive tasks as being of minor importance was extremely myopic. Here he apparently confused the pitcher’s role as batter for the position’s offensive performance. I contend the act of pitching is the position’s true offensive weapon. From a pitcher’s, or batter’s, perspective, it is difficult to imagine a ninety-five mile per hour, rising fastball traveling sixty feet, six inches across the inside corner of the plate as a minor defensive tool. In truth, the pitching position is an assertive one and has a definitive mission attached to every pitch; to retire the opposition’s batter in a most intimidating fashion. Probably no pitcher exemplified this philosophy more than Don Drysdale, the former Dodger great. Drysdale’s aggressiveness led him to establish the Major League career record for hit batters of 154.

I wasn’t one of those guys who woke up mad on the day I pitched. I think if you dwelled on a game all day, you’d become mentally whipped. When I got to the ballpark, which was my office, and put on the uniform, I guess I worked myself into a frenzy. It all locked in when you saw that first batter staring at you from the plate. . . I was the kind of guy who would hit his grandmother to win a game and sing songs at a baseball writer’s dinner the next night. (Ryan & Herskowitz, 1992, p. 61)

Mike Shannon, a former St. Louis Cardinal, recalled Drysdale’s philosophy:

Don Drysdale would consider an intentional walk a waste of three pitches. If he wants to put you on, he can hit you with one. (Koppett, 1991, p. 17)

More recently Randy Johnson, the rangy, flame-throwing lefthander of the Seattle Mariners, aptly demonstrated this aggressiveness in the 1993 All-Star Game. Johnson, facing Philadelphia’s John Kruk, intimidated the National League first
baseman on the very first pitch; a rising rocket which crashed into the backstop behind home plate.

That was the least favorite at-bat of my [Kruk’s] life . . . I’ve had two days of no sleep because of him [Johnson]. He was the one guy I did not want to face. I’ve seen him on TV and he throws 99 mph. I’d rather have both of my arms cut off rather than have to face him again. (Bostrom, 1993, p. D3)

Needless to say, Johnson struck Kruk out, along with just about every other All-Star he faced, as he became the first pitcher in three seasons to throw two perfect innings in the Midsummer Classic. After his All-Star experience Johnson reported, "If I could get all the batters that intimidated, I would have a lot better record." (Wendel, 1993, p. 35) Seemingly it would be fair to note that Kruk and his National League teammates did not view Johnson, or any of the American League pitchers, as Grusky’s purely minor defensive tool for the game of baseball.

In short, the pitcher brings the action to the opposing team and does not solely react in a defensive manner, as fielders do, to the batter’s response. Thus, pitching is inherently offensive-minded, while hitting, at least initially, is inherently defensive.

Tactically, the pitcher is the most important man on the ball field because he is, essentially, the aggressor. In the truest sense, he is the "offense", because he puts the ball in play and does so according to his intentions and ability. He has the initiative -- he knows where he’s going to throw the ball (provided his skill doesn’t fail him), exactly when, and how. He is the deliberate, calculated act, and the batter must react to it. In this sense, it is the batter who is on the defensive side of the action until and unless he hits the ball; only then does the team at bat become the attacker. (Koppett, 1991, p. 42)

What makes hitting an instinctively defensive action? Fear appears to be the primary element.
Fear is the fundamental factor in hitting, and hitting the ball with the bat is the fundamental act of baseball. The fear is simple and instinctive. ... A thrown baseball, in short, is a missile, and an approaching missile generates a reflexive action: Get out of the way. This fact - and it is an unyielding fact that the reflex always exists in all humans - is the starting point for the game of baseball, and yet it is the fact least often mentioned by those who write about baseball. (Koppett, 1991, p. 13)

Additionally Grusky committed a methodological error by equating the position with the player when he noted that, despite being centrally located, pitchers were less important because they worked only one of four days or performed for only a few innings. His rationalization was unsound as the position is always filled. The game cannot be played without the pitching position as it is the initiator of the action. Here he transposed the player with the position, or incumbent with status, and, empirically, the two are not the same.

Players inhabit roles which are classified into positions. Whether the identical player inhabits the position on an everyday basis has no bearing on the position, only on the position's performance, as, no matter who occupies the role the position still exists. To claim that pitchers only perform once every four days does not mean the position performs once every four days. It simply means that a number of occupants perform at the position. This positional rotations suggests pitchers are more actively involved in a greater frequency of independent actions and exert more energy in a physically unnatural activity than other positions, thereby requiring more rest.

There are those who claim that any overhand throwing motion is contrary to nature; but whether it is or not, to use it as often and as hard as pitching requires is an abuse of normal body function. After all, the arm hangs down from the shoulder, the elbow joint turns in, and so many pitching motions require exertion in the opposite directions. All in all, pitching sets up
tremendous strains in muscles, ligaments, tendons, joints, and even certain pieces of bone. (Koppett, 1991, p. 43)

Grusky's contention that the pitching position was noncentral to the game, an assertion Loy and McElvogue hedged on as they exempted the position from their theory, was structurally and empirically erroneous. George "Sparky" Anderson, manager of the Detroit Tigers and one of only seven managers to win more than 2,000 games, claimed pitching was a major anxiety for him because without it success was elusive.

Pitching, and not just because we're having some troubles at the moment. The other positions usually take care of themselves. Guys can blow hot and cold but they usually wind up at their level by the end of the season. But pitching, you can never tell about pitching. I just know you can't win without it. And yes, I do lie awake at night worrying about it. (Falls, 1993, p. 6)

Van Slyke felt pitching was the key to the Florida Marlins' early success in their debut season.

Hey, they're closer to second place than they are to last. Pitching is what is doing it for them, and pitching is what sustains you throughout the whole year. The stats speak for themselves, and their pitching has been pretty darn good. (Staff, 1993, p. 16)

The Chicago White Sox, a hitting-rich contender in the American League West, have attached their fortunes to two twenty-three year-old minority pitchers, hoping to ride their arms into the fall classic.

The biggest key on this team right now is Alex Fernandez and Wilson Alvarez. . . Everybody pinned it on those two guys, saying that's going to be the difference with the White Sox this year. They've gone out to this date and done it and done it way above expectations. Everyone wanted them to just be solid and have solid years. They've gone out and taken it a step beyond that. (Muskat, 1993b, p. 20)
Grusky’s declaration that players who occupied the pitching position were less essential than others can also be challenged on a more quantitative basis. Through a series of three awards, which chronicle a player’s career from his rookie season to retirement, I argue that pitchers, in relation to other positions, are more essential to the game. First, as Table 10 revealed, noncentral positions, pitcher, outfielder, and designated hitter, have captured 55.7% (49 of 88) of the Rookie of the Year Awards. Outfielders received 29.5% of the rookie awards, while pitchers were honored 25% of the time.

Second, also illustrated by Table 10, noncentral positions accounted for 50% (61 of 122) of all Most Valuable Player Awards. Outfielders, 33.6%, and pitchers, 15.6%, were the most honored positions. First base, a position Grusky (1963, p. 348) labeled "a converted outfielder" who "deviates" from the infield pattern, was the third most-often cited valuable position with 13.9% of all MVP awards. This finding matched my elite sample’s three highest paid positions; pitcher, outfielder, and first base.

Third, Table 10 also showed that noncentral positions were responsible for gathering 61.3% (108.5 of 177) of all enshrinements in baseball’s Hall of Fame. By far, outfielders, 30.5%, and pitchers, 30.8%, outdistanced other positions for the profession’s ultimate honor.

Overall, noncentral positions had achieved 56.5% of the three awards compared to 43.5% of centrality’s important positions. Across the three awards, the most honored positions were outfield, pitcher, and first base, again, the three highest
Table 10
Comparison of Rookie of the Year Awards (1947 - 1991), Baseball Writers of America Most Valuable Player Awards (1931 - 1991), and Hall of Fame Membership Through 1991 by Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Rookie Awards</th>
<th>MVP Awards</th>
<th>Hall Of Fame</th>
<th>Total By Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>168.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catcher</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Base</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>2nd Base</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Base</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortstop</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncentral</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>108.5</td>
<td>218.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Hitter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outfield</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitcher</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>95.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For Rookie Awards: In 1976, Pat Zachry and Butch Metzger, both Pitchers, shared the National League Award and were counted as one. In 1979, Alfredo Griffin, a shortstop, and John Castino, a third baseman, shared the American League Awards and each position was credited with half an award. The American League Award began in 1949, two years later than the National League honor. For MVP
Awards: In 1979, Keith Hernandez and Willie Stargell, both first basemen, shared the National League Award and were counted as one position. For Hall of Fame: King Kelly was inducted as an outfielder/catcher, Harmon Killebrew as a first and third baseman, Stan Musial as an outfielder/first baseman, and Monte Ward as a pitcher/shortstop. For these players a half-point was awarded to each position. Individuals inducted as managers, umpires, and executives were excluded from the tally. Source: 1992 Baseball Almanac.

paid positions of the elite sample representing the importance of pitching and hitting, not fielding, to the game.

We should note that players representing the outfield position captured the greatest total number of awards across the three honors. Furthermore, players in positions classified as noncentral earned more honors over all three awards than central players. With pitchers and hitters heavily represented in the noncentral category, while fielders largely comprised the central category, I contend the awards amassed by the noncentral grouping revealed the significance of pitching and hitting over fielding in baseball. This relevance was reflected in my salary analysis presented earlier. We should also realize that pitching and hitting were not major determinants for the construction of centrality.

To summarize, the pitching position accumulated 25% of all Rookie of the Year Awards, 15.6% of all Most Valuable Players Awards, an impressive percentage considering this honor is in addition to its own MVP Award; the Cy Young, the only position to have a separate award, and 30.8% of the Hall of Fame membership. These figures, along with the above illustrations, are indicators that pitching is central to the
game and should be treated as such, as not doing so undermines the theoretical nature
and empirical reality of the profession.

Pitching is 75 percent of baseball -- or 70 percent, or 90, or any other high
number that pops into the mind of the speaker. . . . Pitching is the most
important element in the game. As a rule, the team with the better pitching
staff wins the pennant, while many a heavy-hitting lineup winds up nowhere
because its pitching is poor. (Koppett, 1991, p. 41)

If a pitcher were able, every single time, to throw each pitch exactly where he
wanted to, with the appropriate amount of force and spin, the batter would be
out of business. (Koppett, 1991, p. 30)

Not only did Grusky mislocate the pitching position, he also mislabeled
dependent tasks which ultimately led to the misrepresentation of interaction. Here he
described dependent tasks as the following:

In sharp contrast, infielders' functions are predominantly of the dependent
type. The third baseman must be able to throw the ball accurately and rapidly
to the first baseman and the shortstop must not only field ground balls cleanly
but also be able to toss the ball at the proper angle so the second baseman can
handle it, pivot, avoid the onrushing runner, and throw quickly to the first
baseman. (Grusky, 1962, p. 348)

What Grusky illustrated as dependent tasks appears more likely to be a series
of independent actions totally reliant upon individual performance. For Grusky's third
baseman to "be able to throw the ball accurately and rapidly to the first baseman" is
a feat completely conditional on the ability of that third baseman, as he receives no
assistance from the first baseman or any other position. How does the third
baseman's activity differ from the outfielder running down a fly ball, stopping,
planting, and making a pinpoint throw to the plate? Both types are actions of
individual performance, independent of other positions.
The same can be said for Grusky’s infield combination. Although his hypothetical double-play involved more than one position, the play’s outcome rested solely on individual performances. His shortstop must field the ball cleanly and throw it to the proper side of the base so the second baseman can make the relay to first and complete the play. What Grusky described here were three individual actions, as along each exchange the performances rests completely upon the performers; one cannot extend assistance to another to make their role demand easier. All three must perform individually despite what another might do or not do. In short, Grusky’s dependent tasks were really a series of independent performances clouded under a concept of coordination which eventually led to a misconception of interaction.

Perhaps the best method for understanding Grusky’s dependent tasks as truly independent actions is to examine a failed execution. The following example involved Mike Henneman, a relief pitcher for the Detroit Tigers, and Cecil Fielder, the Tigers’ first baseman.

And he [Henneman] still would have earned his fifth save, if only he could have corralled Keith Miller’s two-out slow bouncer and thrown it accurately to first base. (Knobler, 1993b, p. D1)

Here the writer successfully located the source of the action, the pitcher Henneman. He correctly placed the responsibility for the upcoming play directly upon his individual performance. It was Henneman’s play to make, his chance to earn a save on a routine pick-up and throw to first base.

Instead, Henneman struggled to pick up the spinning ball, threw high to first and watched the ball go off Fielder’s glove. As Mike Macfarlane came around
from second base to score the tying run, Henneman stayed on two knees in the
dirt just in front of first base. (Knobler, 1993b, p. D1)

The anguish of Henneman's failure to perform was aptly portrayed. No
dependent coordination, as Grusky contended, was involved with the play. No one
could assist Henneman, as his teammate Fielder could only watch the ball sail over
his glove. Following the game, Henneman accepted responsibility for the blown play,
an acknowledgment of his independent action.

If I'd have had a good grip, he'd have been out. The game'd have been over.
It just didn't happen, plain and simple. (Knobler, 1993b, p. D1)

Examples like Henneman's are repeated almost daily throughout the season
and what they provide is evidence to suggest that there is no difference between
Grusky's dependent and independent tasks, as coordination of activity with another
position is not essential for either type. But both kinds rely upon Blalock's idea of
individual performance. Perhaps that is why Grusky did not define his notion of
dependent tasks, as the two, independent and dependent, are in reality one and the
same. Furthermore, perhaps this is why baseball officially credits errors to individuals
rather than combinations of individuals or teams.

Ultimately, in a footnote, Grusky admitted his undefined concept of dependent
tasks was not based on any empirical data.

This statement like many others is based largely on personal observation. As
a start, one might utilize box-score data to determine more precisely which
positions have the highest proportion of independent and dependent acts.
(Grusky, 1963, p. 348)
Here Grusky acknowledged the frailty of his conceptual efforts, the type of 'facts' which Blumer said plagued social theory. However, Loy and McElvogue (1970, p. 6) eagerly accepted Grusky's misguided notion of dependent tasks as interaction, "Also, the performance of dependent tasks is positively related to frequency of interaction." They also agreed with Grusky's theoretical misplacement of the pitching position, while, at the same time, they misappropriated Blalock's propositions of organizational discrimination measurement.
CHAPTER IV

THE FURTHER DECONSTRUCTION OF CENTRALITY: 
LOY AND McELVOGUE REVISITED

Following their interpretations and extractions from Blalock and Grusky, Loy and McElvogue based their theoretical construction upon the related factors of spatial location, frequency of interaction, and, to a lesser extent, player responsibility. Their integration of these elements provided them with their hypothesis that "racial segregation in professional team sports is positively related to centrality." (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 7)

For professional baseball, centrality meant that infielders and catchers were assigned to be central to the game, while outfielders were deemed noncentral and pitchers were simply disregarded. We should also note that their conceptualization was produced from a purely defensive posture, as the role the positions played as hitters was not considered, resulting in the following structural configuration:

Baseball teams have a well defined social structure consisting of the repetitive and regulated interaction among a set of nine positions combined into three major substructures or interaction units: (1) the battery, consisting of pitcher and catcher; (2) the infield, consisting of 1st base, 2nd base, shortstop and 3rd base; (3) the outfield, consisting of leftfield, centerfield and rightfield positions. (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 8)

Over the coming pages we will examine a number of issues related to Loy and McElvogue's centrality concept. These issues arise from their primary theoretical
components; spatial location, their notions of a central position and social structure, interaction, player responsibility, and positional segregation. Many of these issues will be addressed in this chapter, while some will be either reserved for, or given greater detail, in the following section. We begin with an exploration of spatial location.

Spatial Location

In arriving at their determination of the playing field's basic structure, Loy and McElvogue cited the pitching position as their most centered location, and announced that those positions nearest this focal point, the infielders and catcher, were central. By contrast, those positions furthest from the pitching mound, the three outfield positions and, later, designated hitter, were characterized as "peripheral and socially isolated" (1970, p. 8) and labeled noncentral. The most centrally located position, the pitching position, was exempted from their analysis. Thus, the most important and responsible positions for baseball became 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base, shortstop, and catcher. Following a racial headcount of central versus noncentral positions, Loy and McElvogue (1970, p. 18) concluded, "that segregation in professional sports is more a function of management than playing personnel." And, "Negroes, because they are not liked by the white establishment, are placed in peripheral positions." (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 22)

Yet their conclusion, which indicted the organizational level of baseball, was arrived at without any investigation of the organizational power relations. In
determining that positional segregation was positively correlated to baseball and racially motivated by baseball management, they never left the playing field. Nor did they measure the white establishment's 'liking' of black players.

Their restricted examination miscast the baseball diamond as the baseball entity, an autonomous being within itself. This suggested those comprising the playing unit were the sole component of a baseball team, and, thus, the field was the location of power and decision-making. Of course, neither are true as the issue is much more complex.

To conduct organizational research we need to study an organization, and not simply a single entity or selected actors of an organization, as its conceptual definition indicates a network of integrated systems of interaction.

An organization is defined as a relatively permanent and relatively complex discernible interaction system. Organizations can be observed as a series of patterned interactions among actors. However, it is not the collection of actors that is our focus but, rather, the interaction among them. (Haas & Drabek, 1973, p. 8)

In Loy and McElvogue's study little, if any, interaction, other than one position throwing the ball to another, was revealed and none was considered between players and other members of the organizational system. Most notably missing was positive evidence of interactional maltreatment by management toward minority players, rather they assumed such practices existed.

Nor did Loy and McElvogue appraise the empirical elements of organizational examinations.
First, interaction systems designated as organizations are relatively permanent. All interaction systems are in a constant state of flux. But for an interaction system to be labeled an organization, it must have a high degree of stability to be observable over time. (Haas & Drabek, 1973, p. 8)

By restricting their analysis exclusively to groups of players with little relative permanence, especially in an age of free agency of a profession with limited playing capacity, Loy and McElvogue ignored the historical stability of the interaction systems. These systems are maintained, stabilized, or changed by owners and upper level management interacting with the remainder of the organizational parts.

Second, organizations are distinct from groups and societies in terms of structural complexity. Again, the division points are somewhat arbitrary at present -- i.e., should two, three, or four structural levels be used as the cut-off point? Structural complexity refers to both horizontal and vertical differentiation. (Haas & Drabek, 1973, p. 9)

Although Loy and McElvogue depicted the playing field as horizontally differentiated, a posture which Blalock (1963) declared as unassummable for baseball as no hierarchy of position existed on the field, they never ventured any further. No vertical differentiation was attempted as their analysis never looked up, rather they remained fixed on one level of the organizational structure while concluding for the entire organization.

Finally, organizations are viewed as interaction systems. There are several important ideas implied here. First, interaction refers to a process of mutual and reciprocal influencing by two or more persons. As our interest is limited to human organization, we focus especially on symbolic interaction. . . . Thus, we view interaction as a broad term that includes such highly patterned sets of events. Behaviors by A influence B's behavior which in turn influences C, and so on. When organizations are viewed as interaction systems, such patterned sets of behaviors are emphasized. (Haas & Drabek, 1973, p. 10 - 11)
Location, and not behavior and reciprocity, was the issue resident to centrality. Patterned sets of interaction also were not revealed. Rather spatial distances with patterned sets of independent individual actions, disguised as dependent tasks, were presented. The players' positions, not their actions, were the focus of centrality, and, it should be fairly obvious, that one position's behavior cannot influence another position's behavior as positions are only capable of spatial existence, while incapable of acting. Interaction remained foreign to centrality.

Second, organizations are more than the simple additive sum of the parts. . . . It is the unique series of interdependent relationships that exist between the parts that characterize the automobile. So it is with organizations. . . Thus, both theoretical concepts and methodological strategies must be directed at the interrelationships among the parts, characteristics of the functioning whole, and the relationship between the whole and its environment. (Haas & Drabek, 1973, p. 11)

Interdependent relationships among the organizational parts were not found in centrality. Loy and McElvogue analyzed only one portion of the organization, the playing field, while disregarding the entire managerial structure from the team manager to the team owner. Yet, they blamed the latter for discriminating activities. For their purpose, the part was the whole.

Third, in all systems, be they social, technological, or astronomical, the criterion of greatest importance is that of interdependence. The components of systems are interrelated, so that a change in one way cause changes of various types in all others. (Haas & Drabek, 1973, p. 11)

Again, only a fraction of the organization, minus any interdependence, was examined through centrality. A baseball team is much more than simply the playing field. There are various levels of management and different categories of employees,
all of whom contribute to the interdependent structure of the team, and, at the same
time, are a reflection of the team’s structure.

The decisions as to who plays, where they play, and what they are paid for
playing are not made on the field, but in the front office. Even the decisions
necessary during the course of a game are not made on the field, but in the dugout.
Neither areas were considered in Loy and McElvogue’s analysis. The playing field
is simply where the game is enacted. Therefore to suggest that the playing field alone
is central is, at best, arbitrary and, at worst, a misrepresentation.

I contend to accurately assess the organizational centrality of a baseball team
and whether its management is guilty of discriminatory practices, the examination
must include the entire organization, and not solely one area, to determine the true
formal structure, central location, and racial activity of that organization. In short, the
focus must be interrelated and expand beyond the playing field.

Central Position

In visualizing the structural construct of centrality what we find are five
primary positions located within the area known as the infield, and three secondary
positions stationed near the outer fringes of the playing field. What these positions
have in common is that, with the current construct, they have little else to do except
stand around and wait for something to happen. There is no action in centrality
because their most centrally located position, the pitching position, has been left void.
The same barren stature was also awarded to the batter’s box.
Whereas Grusky (1962) labeled the pitcher as noncentral, Loy and McElvogue, who borrowed much of Grusky's argument, exempted the position from their analysis, leaving their most centered position as a non-entity within a theory of centrality. Why? Loy and McElvogue provided three methodological reasons for not including the pitching position in their theoretical construction.

Their first reason was "the data comparable to that collected for other players was not available." (Loy & Elvogue, 1970, p. 8) Although they were correct that performance statistics for players and pitchers are incompatible for direct comparative analysis, this should not preclude the pitching position from the analysis. Perhaps having a distinct brand of statistics, as pitchers do, suggests a certain exclusive significance for the position that qualifies it to be primary in nature.

However, we also must remember that Loy and McElvogue's main objective with centrality was a measurement of positional segregation through a racial headcount of the positions. To accomplish this, they simply noted the racial occupancy of each position through "official yearbooks." For this directive, performance statistics are meaningless. It is the racial characteristic of the performer which matters. It logically follows that if this trait was accessible through the yearbooks for the other positions, they would exist for pitchers. Therefore, the racial assessment could have been conducted for the pitching position.

Loy and McElvogue's (1970, p. 8) second reason was extremely vague, "The high rate of interchangability among pitchers precluded accurate recording of data." Accurate and official recordings of pitchers' data appear regularly; daily in box scores,
weekly in Sunday and specialty papers, and yearly in annuals and yearbooks. Whether a pitcher fails to register an out or goes the distance, the data is collected and reported. The interchangability among pitchers has no effect on the data, but is reflected in the data.

Finally, Loy and McElvogue (1970, p. 8) repeated Grusky's (1962) argument, "Pitchers are in a sense only part-time players, in that they typically play in only one game out of four, or if relief pitchers - play for only a few innings in any given game." Here they committed the same fallacy Grusky did; they confused the player with the position, a methodological faux pas we covered in the previous chapter.

We learned in Chapters Two and Three that pitchers can be accounted for quantitatively through salary and racial evaluation, and qualitatively through narrative illustrations. We discovered that they were the highest paid position with the lowest racial distribution and were considered the most meaningfully important position on the field. To classify pitching as noncentral, whether through directive or omission, misses the theoretical heartbeat of baseball.

Social Structure

In defining their structural formation, Loy and Elvogue (1970, p. 8) labeled the playing field a "well defined social structure." But, is it? The structure is truly well defined, as, for the most part, positions do not vary their location. However, by calling their spatial organization a 'social' structure, they implied a setting which exceeded the reality of the environment.
I believe that social structures are comprised of sets of relationships between individuals; a setting constructed through meaningful, and often repetitive, interactions between the self and others, rather than the spatial locations between self and others. Thus, the social structure actually consists of networks of relationships grounded in meanings shared by the actors.

Most non-interactionist conceptions of structure exclude meaning from their considerations of social structure. Since meanings provide the basis for individual and collective action, people's meanings will have consequences for action, the production of social structure, and changes within those structures. . . . Meaning, however, is equally important to social organization because it shapes stability and change within social structures. (Fine & Kleinman, 1983, p. 98)

The relational meanings found in the structural setting are constructed through the negotiations between actors participating in the activity of the relationship.

Relationships are continually subject to negotiation between members. These negotiations, central to symbolic interactionist analyses of social life, produce changes in the social structure of a group, or its negotiated order. . . . Change is endemic to social structure, with relationships changing through ongoing interaction, in subtle and dynamic ways. (Fine & Kleinman, 1983, p. 100)

For Denzin (1989, p. 66), a "social structure is made up of interacting individuals who come together in social situations." The playing field may very well be a source of social situations for the fans in attendance. It also may be a location for social situations for the players prior to the game. But once the players take their official positions, their spatial assignments, and the game begins, the field becomes a working environment for the players.

Nowhere within Loy and McElvogue's conception of a social structure were interactional relationships and their underlying meanings presented. What their
playing field realistically displayed was a work environment, the "office" alluded to by Drysdale in the previous chapter. To call this type of structure 'social' was a misnomer as it incorrectly defined the situation, the type of activity conducted by the actors within the structure, an important distinction.

To clarify this point, a true social structure suggests an interaction between individuals which culminates in a collective action arrived at through interpretation, negotiation, and shared meaning for the individuals. In short, the participants define the situation and determine what is to be done and how it is to be accomplished. However, a working environment houses predetermined activity, scripted individual performances which culminate in an orchestrated collective performance. In short, the situation is already defined for the participants and the participants simply do what is expected of them.

The playing field qualifies as the latter. It is a determined area where those occupying a position ply their trade, earn their living, and support their lifestyle, but have little input into the situational definition. For the player, the meaning of the baseball field is the equivalent of the machinist’s factory or the accountant’s office. Here defining situations through interaction is not a primary, or even required, function. Players are told when they are playing, what spatial location they will occupy, and where they will be positioned in the hitting order.

However, by referring to the playing field as a social structure, Loy and McElvogue were allowed to inject the undefined concept of "task interaction" into
their theory. A confusing inclusion when we consider their notion of interaction and their inability to distinguish its social aspects.

In treating interaction, one should, of course, distinguish between task interaction and social interaction since there is probably only a moderate correlation between the two. (Loy & Elvogue, 1970, p. 18)

If little association exists between task and social interaction, why does the location of the interaction become a social structure, where the actors define the situation, rather than a task structure, where the situation is defined for the actors? This relationship remains unclear as, potentially, the idea of task interaction becomes a pseudonym for Blalock’s more accurate term: performance.

As we shall discover later, in baseball the situations are defined, not through the interaction of the players, but for the performance of the participants.

The spatial location presented by Loy and Elvogue is a structuralist conception which lacks in relationships and meanings. It is characterized as social and interactional, but when analyzed it appears one-dimensional and missing its most central spatial location. Like Blalock (1962), I contend that the field is the location where the players simply perform their role demands in a work structure, an environment similar to the tooling performed by the machinist and the balancing act performed by the accountant. The field, or rather the stadium, is mostly social and interactional for the fans in attendance, and, perhaps, in a postmodern sense, for those watching on television or listening to radio.
Loy and McElvogue's use of "social" and "interactional" was misleading as it resulted in an incorrect definition of interaction, which, in turn, mistakenly located the true interaction of the playing field.

Interaction

To determine the location of any situation thought to be social and interactional, the observer has to take the role of those involved in the interactional process.

The research scholar who is concerned with the social action of a given individual or group, or with a given type of social action, must see that action from the position of whoever is forming the action. He should trace the formation of the action in the way in which it is actually formed. This means seeing the situation as it is seen by the actor. (Blumer, 1969, p. 56)

This procedure is to approach the study of group activity through the eyes and experience of the people who have developed the activity. Hence, it necessarily requires an intimate familiarity with this experience and with the scenes of its operation. (Blumer, 1969, p. 139)

Centrality, as proposed by Loy and McElvogue, failed on both accounts; it neither captured the social actor or the actor's experience. Spatial location is not a predeterminant for interaction, nor does it automatically define a setting as 'social', as it measures distance rather than meaningful relationships.

Baseball is meaningfully interactional on two fronts. First is the relationship the team has with its followers. This form of interaction is by far the most important. By providing meaningful social action for the team's fans, the team achieves a certain degree of success which cannot always be matched by a won-lost record. Nor is it restricted to the playing field.
When Mike Ilitch purchased the Detroit Tigers, a successful, tradition-rich franchise, he ordered Mike Dietz, Tigers' Director of Marketing, to ascertain what the fans wanted from his club. For Dietz, the job was simple.

The Tigers had done all these surveys, and there were stacks and stacks of letters and forms from fans telling the team what they liked and didn't like about coming to the ballpark. So our work was done for us, we just took what the fans told us, and put it to use. (Becker, 1993, p. B1)

This interaction between the team and the fans resulted in more day games, group ticket discounts, senior citizen discounts, fireworks after Friday night games, promotional giveaways, allowing youth under 14 to run the bases after Monday night games, new uniforms, and a redesigned logo.

"We've gotten a lot of letters, and people say the road uniforms are boring and the logo is boring," Dietz said. "We're just trying to spruce it up some." (Roberts, 1993c, p. B3)

Nary a mention of a position or spatial location in this social setting, but plenty of shared meanings were evident in the perspectives of the team and its fans.

The second interactional front in baseball is restricted to a limited area of the playing field, an area we will discuss later. This is because baseball, in comparison with other team sports, is a highly predefined, non-interactional game. Blalock (1962, p. 244) recognized this when he wrote, "In this profession performance depends only to a slight degree on interpersonal relations and manipulative skills."

We can go one further. Not only is there little interpersonal interaction within a team on the playing field, there is little across competing teams as well. For example, on Sunday, April 5, 1992, viewers of WGN television were treated to a
somewhat unique experience when the Chicago White Sox played the Houston Astros in Denver's Mile High Stadium. What made this exhibition game unique was both teams sported black caps, jerseys, and leggings. The Astros wore white pants, while the Sox wore light gray pants, a difference hardly discernable. In short, both teams wore nearly identical uniforms and the game was played without a hitch.

This game signified that interpersonal interaction, either among or between teams, is fairly unnecessary as the situations are so highly determined for the players that individual recognition of participants is not of primary concern. We can only imagine the chaos that would result for Steve Young, as he stood in the pocket attempting to interact with Jerry Rice, amid a sea of twenty-one black helmets and jerseys. However, for baseball, the lack of players' identification is not a problem due to a lack of interaction.

Denzin (1989, p. 12) defined interaction as "to act on one another, to be capable of mutual action that is emergent. For human beings, interaction is symbolic, involving the use of language." For Blumer (1969, p. 66), symbolic interaction "involves interpretation, or ascertaining the meaning of the action or remarks of the other person, and definition or conveying indications to another person as how he is to act."

However, baseball is a highly predefined game that requires little interpretation, ascertainment, and definition of mutual action among the players because: (a) the batting team can only advance in a predetermined direction; and, (b) there is no interference allowed with the flight of the ball, or the potential fielder, by the batting
team once the ball is put into play. No other major team sport applies similar limitations, as evident by the interception, block, pick, screen, tackle, and body check in other team sports. These baseball limitations, in turn, provide the fielding team with a tremendous advantage; they know in which direction the batter must run and his destination before the ball is hit. The combination of these two structural restrictions, along with field and weather conditions, actually define the situations for the players.

For example, with two outs and nobody on base, the shortstop knows in advance, if the ball is hit to him, he will be able to field it cleanly without any interference and that he should throw it to first base because that is where the batter must go. No interpersonal interaction is necessary for him to fulfill his role demand. The shortstop’s action is simply an act of performance, one which has been defined by the situation presented him. This action reflects what Erving Goffman (1974, p. 1) meant when he borrowed from Shakespeare, "All the world is not a stage."

Presumably, a "definition of the situation" is almost always to be found, but those who are in the situation ordinarily do not create this definition, even though their society often can be said to do so; ordinarily all they do is to assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act accordingly. (Goffman, 1974, pp. 1-2).

To act accordingly, or perform, in a determined environment, such as the playing field, is not a truly interactional activity, but more of a reactive one. Blumer identified this type of action as non-symbolic.

Non-symbolic interaction takes place when one responds directly to the action of another without interpreting that action; symbolic interaction involves interpretation of the action. Non-symbolic interaction is most readily apparent
in reflex responses as in the case of a boxer who automatically raises his arm to parry a blow. (Blumer, 1969, p. 8)

Blumer’s boxer is our shortstop who, responding to the movement of the ball, automatically moves after it, fields the grounder and throws to first base in one fluid motion without interpretation, negotiation, or ascertainment. In short, his performance is a reflexive action in response to the situation defined by others and presented to him. Our shortstop simply recognizes the situation, that is, he interacts within himself, becoming an object to his self-indication.

Anything of which a human being is conscious of is something which he is indicating to himself . . . Self-indication is a moving communication process in which the individual notes things, assesses them, gives them meaning, and decides to act on the basis of the meaning. (Blumer, 1969, pp. 80-81)

Our shortstop’s self-indication is by no means to be considered as instinctual or robotic behavior. It should be viewed as habitual, resulting from years of learned knowledge and experience stored into accessible meanings to be recalled at the appropriate instance, and not as originating from the interpretation of another, but rather from the meaningful recognition of an object; the ball. It is the objective nature of the ball which defines our shortstop’s action.

This internal interactional process described by Blumer appropriately precedes my, and Blalock’s, definition of playing field activity, namely individual performance and not the interaction as suggested by Loy and McElvogue.

Thus, we reason that Negroes may be excluded from central positions because these positions involve high rates of interaction which lead to greater personal contact among players than do peripheral positions in an organization. (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 18)
The authors may be correct that black players are excluded from their central positions. However, if they are exempted, the cause would not be the "high rates of interaction" they claim, as interpersonal interaction is not necessary on the field. What is necessary is individual performance at each position, an intrapersonal interaction of reactive anticipation.

In fielding, the mental work is paramount. The thinking done by pitchers and batters is primarily concerned with outguessing each other, but a fielder does not have to outguess a moving baseball; he has to anticipate which way it is likely to move before it starts. (Koppett, 1991, p. 73)

Of course, much of the reactive anticipation has been determined prior to the game through scouting reports and, thus, much of the fielding interpretation has been removed before the first pitch, thus, making the fielding positions even more intrapersonal than interpersonal.

I am not claiming that interpersonal interaction does not exist among players. It surely does occur in the dugout and off the field, and probably more frequently on road trips. However, it is not my purpose to evaluate interaction in these areas, as they were not included in the centrality theory. Also, I am not insinuating that symbolic interaction is absent from the playing field. It exists and is vital to the game, but is located in an area that somehow eluded the centrality examination. We will discuss this in the following chapter.

I have one final point to make concerning the lack of interaction on the playing field. Baseball has no penalties. When compared to other team sports, except for the occasional ejection which usually involves a manager rather than a player,
baseball is relatively punishment free. No yardage is assessed. No play is lost. No player is temporarily removed from the game. On the rare occasions when a player is ejected, the team is not punished, the player is penalized. His team does not lose possession or its location on the field. What the team does lose is his individual performance. But another player replaces the ejected one and the game continues where it was interrupted.

In short, baseball does not require penalties because there is little interaction between or among players, so violations are infrequent occurrences. In relation to true interaction, baseball is a game where most moves are predetermined and positional responsibility is equalized.

Responsibility

Another major element of the centrality theory is positional responsibility, where those positions labeled as central are granted a greater share.

In short, the central positions in major league baseball and football are typically the most responsible or so called "brain positions". (Loy & Elvogue, 1970, p. 18)

Here Loy and McElvogue suggested that white baseball management was restricting black baseball players from infield positions because management deemed they were not intelligent enough to appropriately perform at those positions. They also implied that location positively correlated to responsibility, an assumption Loy and McElvogue (1970, p. 19) determined by "the total number of assists made by occupants of given field positions."
As we have already seen, assists are a very biased evaluative tool when measuring positional responsibility. Outfielders are not presented with as many opportunities to throw a runner out as afforded infielders. As we will see in the next chapter, assists are of questionable relevance as these are primarily related to only one of the eight potential outcomes of true baseball interaction.

Additionally, assists are unsatisfactory in that they only measure a portion of one-half of a position’s responsibility. Here Loy and McElvogue completely ignored the most important and difficult responsibility of all field positions; hitting.

Even more realistically, all professional players know that teams choose players for their hitting ability. The two great exceptions are shortstop and catching, but even here, if one shortstop can outhit another by 50 points, he’ll get the job unless his fielding skill is downright inadequate. . . . fielding skill is teachable and learnable, to a greater degree than either hitting (which is mostly inborn) or pitching (which involves a lot of learning, but only after the special gift of "a good arm" is present). (Koppett, 1991, p. 72-73)

But to hit a baseball into fair territory, hard enough to have any reasonable chance of the ball falling safe, one must connect almost perfectly. A line drive can result only if the line from the center of the ball through the point of contact to the center of the bat is practically straight. The height of the area in which the bat and ball can meet squarely is something less than half an inch. (Koppett, 1991, p. 19)

How precise can a responsibility measurement be when it disregards the most valuable and demanding obligation accorded a position? Most assuredly a player’s hitting ability will affect whether he attains a roster spot which, in turn, allows him to gain responsibility for a position.

Their use of assists as an evaluative measure also misrepresented performance. Here Loy and McElvogue attempted to disguise it as interaction. When in fact, the
act of one player throwing the ball is a single and separate individual performance, just as the act of one player catching the ball is also a single and separate individual performance, both are separate actions defined by the situation. Whether the actions are successful or not has no relationship to interaction, only performance.

If our shortstop makes an unsuccessful throw, one which pulls the waiting first baseman off the bag, causes him to leap to make the catch, and forces him to tag the runner before he reaches the base, the throw still results in a successful play. The success of the play was not due to interaction, but to individual performance, most notably of the first baseman. Nor was interaction necessary prior to the play, as the definition of the situation, the number of outs and runners on base, the score, the direction the batter must run, the lack of interference in the field, dictated the performance of the shortstop and first baseman.

Furthermore, if assists were a vital statistic to the degree of responsibility it would logically follow that central positions, those having the greater number of assists, would be the highest rewarded positions, as these would be the most responsibly demanding. However, as we discovered in Chapter Two, these were not the most rewarded, either in my sample of elites or in all of baseball.

I contend that infielders, or the "brain positions", have no more, or less, responsibility than outfielders. Both are reactive positional types which rely heavily on individual performances. Although infielders compile more assists, outfielders have more territory to be responsible for, must provide back-up to the infield positions when the ball gets past them, and also must make accurate throws, usually of a
greater distance, to predetermined locations on the field. Here all fielding positions share an equally reactive responsibility; to get to the ball as quickly as possible and then get the ball to the proper location as quickly and accurately as possible.

What follows are brief narratives by two all-star players, one a white shortstop, the other a black center fielder, explaining their intrapersonal preparation for their respective positions. First, Alan Trammell, a shortstop with the Detroit Tigers:

"I want to feel my body making every exact move it has to make," Trammell says. "I want to feel myself taking a ball off my left foot and planting with my right; I want to feel that first step I make towards a ball away from me. I need to feel that so that when the game comes I'll do it instantly." (Falkner, 1990, p. 160)

Next are the words of Willie Mays, the hall-of-fame outfielder of the San Francisco Giants and New York Mets:

When a ball was hit, I didn't move. From the moment it was up in the air, I started counting to five: one, two, three, four, five. At "Five" I began to run. I made the catch look easy. Believe me, it was a science as much as baseball skill. I don't think an airplane engineer could have solved the mystery of Candlestick [Park]. But somehow those five seconds gave me a chance to see whether the wind would take the ball, and if it did, where it would go. Every day, I would measure the wind in my mind - how hard it was blowing and in what direction. (Falkner, 1990, p. 268)

Notice the intrapersonal interactive preparation expressed by both players, different positions, but similar mental exercises, with the same responsibility; to get to the ball as efficiently and quickly as possible. Their reactions are clearly in response to an object, the ball, rather than another. Thus, is it realistic, or even appropriate, to label Trammell's position more intelligent and responsible than Mays'?
Hardly. Both are based on reactive personal performance, equally distinct performances, yet equally strategic and vital to their positions and teams.

At their spatial locations, both positional types share a common intrapersonal reactive responsibility. However, as we will discover in the following chapter, the players are not strictly reactive participants.

Positional Segregation

If spatial location does not necessarily promote interaction and lead to increased responsibility on the playing field, then the concept of positional segregation, as outlined by Loy and McElvogue, comes into question. If being forced to play an outfield, or noncentral, position carried with it a certain professional and personal stigma, then, in all likelihood, most players would object to playing such a position. This objection might even be more prevalent if the player was white and previously an all-star performer at an infield, or central, position.

However, this does not seem to be the case. Again, Alan Trammell, a six-time all-star shortstop with four gold gloves and the 1987 American League MVP runner-up, was asked by Detroit manager Sparky Anderson to make a positional move to center field. Trammell’s response:

"Until they actually tell me to not to go out there to center, I’m going to continue to go out there and try to work hard because the name of the game is being prepared," Trammell said. "What happens if we don’t get anybody to play center field and we have to go with what we have now, or somebody gets hurt during the season?" (Roberts, 1993a, p. C5)
Trammell's remark was not of a stigmatized professional, one who has been demoted to the social periphery, but rather of a player who loves the game.

The same scenario faced five-time all-star second baseman Steve Sax. Chicago White Sox manager Gene Lamont requested that Sax move to left field, eventually making room for his Hispanic replacement, Joey Cora. Sax responded with determination, "I'm not taking (left) lightly. I'll work hard on it. It's not as if I haven't played there before." (USA Today Baseball Weekly, 1993a, p. 10)

Following his first start in left field, Sax commented on his new positional assignment. "For some reason, it hasn't been hard to deal with. You can look at it as a demotion or as a fresh start. I'm optimistic." (USA Today Baseball Weekly, 1993b, p. 43) Like Trammell, Sax viewed his assignment as a challenge, rather than a punishment.

Finally, Robin Yount, the 1982 American League MVP shortstop for Milwaukee, was moved to center field following the 1984 season after ten years in the Brewers' infield. Yount went on to win another Most Valuable Player award, this time in 1989 as an outfielder.

Do these illustrations of three, white, highly acclaimed, former infielders mean positional segregation does not exist in professional baseball? No, not at all. But it does tend to suggest that positional segregation, as detailed through centrality, is not the social plague depicted by Loy and McElvogue.

Why has centrality failed to accurately capture segregation? Three major reasons stand out: (1) Loy and McElvogue treated the positions on the playing as the
team, while they ignored the interactional power positions of the organizational structure; (2) they were unable to view baseball as a highly intrapersonal, reactive, predetermined game; and (3) they neglected the true locations of baseball's interactive focal points, the pitcher's mound and the batter's box.
CHAPTER V

AN INTERACTIONIST VIEW OF CENTRALITY

For an interactionist, baseball has never been a field of dreams. As a game, it has always held theoretical illustrations for larger life experiences. This tradition is rooted in George Herbert Mead’s correlation between "ball nine" and development of the self.

The game represents the passage in the life of the child from taking the role of others in play to the organized parts that is essential to self-consciousness in the full sense of the term. (Mead, 1972, p. 152)

For an interactionist theory of centrality, the social actor or the actor’s experience must be captured, rather than some abstracted conception of the actor or the experience. To accomplish this we must move from spatial locations to more meaningful representations, those which account for action, ascertainment, gestures, and taking the role of the other. Therefore, we must think in terms of players who occupy positions on the playing field, instead of empty, spatially located positions incapable of activity. We must also imagine these players as being involved with the entirety of the game, pitching, batting, and base running, as well as fielding, if we are to grasp the interactive essence of baseball.

The starting point for our theoretical journey to discover baseball’s interactive centrality begins with action, the situational activities of the players.
The activities belong to the acting individuals and are carried on by them always with regard to the situations in which they have to act. The import of this simple and essentially redundant characterization is that fundamentally human groups or society exists in action and must be seen in terms of action. Conceptual schemes that depict society in some other fashion can only be derivations from the complex of ongoing activity that constitutes group life. (Blumer, 1969, p. 6)

There was no action in Loy and McElvogue's (1970) structural version of centrality because there were no players, just central positions, infielders and catcher, and noncentral positions, outfielders. Furthermore, they had no pitching or batting positions. Without these there could never be any simulation of existing action in their depiction of centrality, as these two positions are baseball's most active. Overall, the lack of players, especially pitchers and batters, made their concept a synthetic derivative of what constitutes the ongoing activity of baseball.

For us, we must convert Loy and McElvogue's spatially located positions to players actively engaging in shared activity on the playing field.

The life of any human society consists necessarily of an ongoing process of fitting together the activities of its members. It is this complex of ongoing activity that establishes and portrays structure or organization. To be empirically valid the scheme must be consistent with the nature of the social action of human beings. (Blumer, 1969, p. 7)

We must ask ourselves who originates this action? Where is the ongoing activity primarily located? How is the meaning of the action transmitted and shared among the players? To properly locate the interactive centrality of the baseball field, we cannot simply conclude that two acts of individual performance, such as one player throwing the ball and another catching it, qualifies as an interactional activity. This is because ascertainment, the accounting of another's action, is not a necessary
component of these two individual performances due to the definitions presented to
the players by the situation. For interaction to exist, along with its resulting shared
meaning, ascertainment must be made by the players. In short, the ascertainment
must be more than simply reacting to the definition presented by the situation.

Put simply, human beings in interacting with one another have to take account
of what each other is doing or is about to do; they are forced to direct their
own conduct or handle their situations in terms of what they take into account.
... The actions of others have to be taken into account and cannot be regarded
as merely an arena for the expression of what one is disposed to do or sets out
to do. (Blumer, 1969, p. 8)

The central infielders of Loy and McElvogue’s theory did not have to account
for each other’s actions because of baseball’s predetermined nature. Their shortstop
knew in advance what he was to do as his definition was defined for him by the
situation. He knew he could make his play without any interference from an opposing
player, and he also knew in which direction the batter must run. There was no need
for him to ascertain the action of another player, he only had to react to the outcome
of another’s action.

Of course, there were no pitchers or batters in their centrality, players who
constantly engage in ascertainment of each other, so there was no action and,
therefore, no need to ascertain what another player intends to do. Without action and
ascertainment, gestures were not required in their concept.

A gesture is any part or aspect of an ongoing action that signifies the larger
act of which it is a part - for example, the shaking of a fist as an indication
of a possible attack, or the declaration of war by a nation as an indication of
a posture and line of action of that nation. (Blumer, 1969, p. 9)
The playing field must also contain a presentation of gestures and a shared meaningful response to them to be truly interactional.

Thus, the gesture has meaning for both the person who makes it and for the person to whom it is directed. When the gesture has the same meaning for both, the two parties understand each other. From this brief account it can be seen that the meaning of the gesture flows out along three lines (Mead’s triadic nature of meaning): It signifies what the person to whom it is directed is to do; it signifies what the person who is making the gesture plans to do; and it signifies the joint action that is to arise by the articulation of the acts of both. (Blumer, 1969, p. 9)

In Loy and McElvogue’s centrality the presentation and shared meanings of gestures were absent. There was no indication of which position the action was directed to, which position was making the gesture, or no signification of any joint action between the positions. Some might argue, that as part of the central structure, their catcher may engage in presenting and responding to gestures. After all, part of the catcher’s role is to call for the pitches. But to whom? And for whom? They had no pitcher or batter, the players who gesture and respond most often, so there was no one for the catcher, or any of their other positions, to act toward.

Lastly, to complete our interactional construct of centrality, our players must interpret the actions of others from the other’s perspective.

[T]hat the parties to such interaction must necessarily take each other’s roles. To indicate to another what he is to do, one has to make the indication from the standpoint of that other. (Blumer, 1969, p. 9)

Quite simply, there was no "other" in Loy and McElvogue’s centrality concept. There were only structurally located positions, which were inactive, incapable of ascertaining and indicating, and unable to interact because there were no other
perspectives to interpret. Their theory was void of meaning and interaction because there were no pitchers and batters, the originators of, and primary participants in, the central locale of baseball’s interaction.

Location of Interaction

The action, ascertainment, indication of gestures, and taking the role of the other is primarily found within the interaction between the pitcher and the batter. Here is where the action is initiated and ongoing. Here is where the active accounting of one player’s activity is recognized and returned by another.

Here is where the pitcher provides an indication of what the batter is to do, what the pitcher intends to do, and what the joint action constitutes; in this case, the delivery of a potentially hitable pitch.

Here is where taking the role of the other constantly occurs, as the pitcher gestures and ascertains the batter’s indications, while the batter gestures and responds while ascertaining the pitcher’s indications, as both act from the other’s perspective.

The pitcher, the generator of the game’s action, brings an arsenal of weapons to the interactional front. These must be interpreted by the batter from the pitcher’s perspective.

Suffice it to say that a pitcher can employ time (by varying the speed of his deliveries), space (by pitching high, low, inside, outside), trajectory (by making the ball curve or otherwise change direction on the way to the plate), deception (by making the hitter expect one thing while doing another), knowledge (of hitters’ weaknesses and his own assets), and strategy (by limiting the batter’s choice in particular situations, apart from deception.) (Koppett, 1991, p. 43)
After making a pitch, the pitcher interprets his next action, from the batter’s perspective, by the response displayed by the batter to the previous action.

"I could usually tell, by watching the hitter’s reactions, how he would have hit a ball even if he didn’t go through with the swing," he said. "You watch his legs, arms, body, eyes - everything. Sometimes, then, you may throw a pitch, outside the strike zone, just to watch his responses; it may tell you something." (Eddie Lopat cited in Koppett, 1991, p. 47)

Of course, the pitcher can interpret even more in his interaction with the batter, if the batter actually swings at a pitch.

"Specifically, though, look at it this way: If you throw a fastball and he fouls it off down the first-base line (a right-handed hitter, I mean), you know he was a little late swinging at it. If he fouls it past third, you know he swung a little early. Now, if the thing you’re doing is trying to prevent him from pulling the ball, you might try another one if you know he’s been timing it late - if you’ve got that good a fastball, of course - but you’d be absolutely crazy to try another one if he had just shown he was swinging at it too soon. So what he does with one pitch, or a series of pitches, can help you decide what to do with the next one." (Eddie Lopat cited in Koppett, 1991, p. 47)

The batter, in turn, interprets the pitcher’s next action based on the previous act(s) from the pitcher’s perspective, a repeated physical and mental interaction which occurs on every pitch of every game.

Of course this activity is more taxing for the pitcher, as he has to ascertain, gesture, and account for a variety of others with various abilities, while the group of batters can collectively interact among themselves, through the shared meanings of their experiences, regarding one pitcher. Ultimately, both the pitcher and the batter understand the interaction through the shared meaning of the process.

Fundamentally, the pitcher wants the reverse of the hitter’s coin. The hitter is looking for "his" pitch to hit. The pitcher is trying to make the hitter hit "his" - the pitcher’s - pitch. (Koppett, 1991, p. 56)
How does the pitcher attempt to make the batter hit "his" pitch, and how does the batter look for "his" pitch to hit? What do these players bring to the interaction? What role do the fielders play in relation to the interaction? Answering these questions will allow us to further identify and define an interactionist theory of centrality.

Interaction Equipment

To understand the pitching position's role in baseball's interaction, it is necessary for us to have an idea of what goes through the pitcher's mind on the mound. His thoughts formulate his action, ascertainment, gestures, and role interpretation perceived through the batter's viewpoint.

First, he is always aware of the count, the number of outs, the score, and the inning. Each of these things will influence the decision on which pitch to throw. (Koppett, 1991, p. 56)

Here the pitcher is ascertaining the definition of the situation presented him. He determines whether he pitches from the wind-up, or with runners on base, the stretch. He decides whether he has to 'go after' a hitter, or if there is room to 'pitch away' and, potentially, put the batter on base. Whether a starter or relief pitcher, the situation presented to him establishes his fundamental strategy for his next interactive encounter.

Second, he has his book of each hitter's strengths and weaknesses at his mental fingertips, having reviewed each item before the game. (Koppett, 1991, p. 56)
Here the pitcher is taking the role of the batter; mentally entering the batter’s box to determine what to throw him, what not to throw him, pitch velocity, and pitch location. The ultimate goal is to gesture toward the batter that "his", the batter’s, pitch is being delivered, while, in reality, throwing to his own strength or the batter’s weakness. In short, the pitcher is trying to set up the batter for his ‘out’ pitch.

Third, he has firmly in mind the current state of his own equipment - which pitches are working right today and which aren’t, and not only "today" but this inning. (Koppett, 1991, p. 56)

Here the pitcher ascertains his own current abilities against those of the batter’s from his own perspective. Interestingly enough, even though the combatants may be the same, the interaction can change from situation to situation, as, here, the rules are not as defined as the rest of baseball.

"They say don’t throw soft stuff to a little hitter with men on base." (A little hitter means a not very good one with little power, not a small person.) "But because everybody has said that and done that, he’s probably never seen a slow pitch in a tight situation, and is totally unequipped to react to it. So if you do it, exactly because you’re not supposed to, it may be the best thing in the world." (Don Drysdale cited in Koppett, 1991, p. 60)

Another reason the interaction is more taxing for the pitcher than the batter is because the pitcher has to interact with hitters who have changed locale and role and become base runners. Now the pitcher has multiple interactions with which he must contend.

Fourth, he [the pitcher] is influenced by the number and location of the men on base. (Koppett, 1991, p. 56)

Here the pitcher not only has to take account of the batter, but also ascertain the base runner’s motive, ability, and role, all from the runner’s perspective. Then
he must address his own capabilities of successfully holding the runner close or attempting to pick him off, while engaging in his ongoing interaction with the batter.

Lastly, the pitcher has to consider the ballpark and the weather conditions.

In a large park, where long flies make luscious outs, more high pitches can be risked than in a small one. The same is true if the wind is blowing in rather than out. If the wind is strong out to right field, left-handed hitters must be prevented from pulling the ball, but if the wind is strong blowing in, that may be a good way to get them out. If the day is overcast and dark, or if the lights at a night game aren't the best, speed becomes more effective. Certain times of the day - like twilight anywhere, or when the grandstand shadow passes the mound at Yankee Stadium - create conditions of visibility that can help a pitcher. (Koppett, 1991, p. 60.)

As we have just witnessed, the pitcher's role is a highly interactive one. He has to ascertain, indicate, and interpret batters, base runners, ball parks, the situations presented to him, and weather conditions. Much of this also holds true for the batter.

However, the batter has an interactional advantage as he can begin his mental ascertainment before entering the batter's box by taking the role of the pitcher from the dugout, on-deck circle, or through interaction with team members who have already faced the pitcher, while the pitcher is currently engaged with another batter.

While the pitcher's mental interpretations are primarily offensive in nature, the batter usually focuses on items of a more defensive character, as he concentrates more on the pitcher's intent to retire him rather than his intent to reach base safely.

1. What is the pitcher's best stuff, and what is his best today? 2. What sequences of pitches has he gotten me out with in the past? 3. Knowing my weaknesses - which he does - how does he usually try to exploit them with his particular equipment? 4. Which of his deliveries have been behaving properly the last couple of innings, and which haven't? 5. What is the situation in the game and what do I want to accomplish? 6. What is there about this ballpark
and this day - dimensions, wind strength and direction, visibility - that should affect my intentions? What pitch do I want to hit? (Koppett, 1991, pp. 25-26)

The first interactional objective of the batter is to avoid striking out, especially if there are runners on base. This defensive posture is exemplified by hitters shortening, or cutting down, their swing when the count reaches two strikes. Here is where the foul ball becomes an ally in his interactional confrontation with the pitcher. It is the batter's logical defense in his battle with the pitcher.

According to research by STATS, Inc., each foul ball shifts the balance in favor of the batter. . . Why? Physically, the more pitches a batter sees, the better he can adjust to movement and location, and therefore time his swing. (Schechter, 1993, p. 31)

The foul ball also provides a running account of the interaction.

Pitchers who have sailed through six or seven innings frequently find themselves removed on the strength of a couple of loud fouls that tell the manager that the pitcher is losing his sharpness. If the fouls are just ticked back to the screen, it means the hop is still on the fastball. When batters keep hitting opposite-field fouls, the pitcher is obviously faster than they [the batters] think he is. (Schechter, 1993, p. 31)

After avoiding a strikeout, the batter's next objective is to move the base runner along. This can be accomplished through a sacrifice, giving himself up for the advancing runner, through a bunt or a fly ball to the outfield. Only after this does a batter try to reach base either by a hit or walk.

We can see that the batter's role, like the pitcher's, is a highly interactional one. But it does differ. Where the pitcher's interactional role is most notably offensive, the batter's role is primarily defensive before becoming offensive. Both are extremely active positions in baseball's interaction, as they constantly ascertain,
gesture, and interpret in tandem. In short, pitchers and batters contribute to creating the definition of the situation, as they interact from the situation presented them. But the same cannot be said for the fielders.

Loy and McElvogue’s central and noncentral positions did not ascertain or interpret interactively from another’s perspective, but intra-actively from their own reactive perspective. (We touched on this point briefly in the previous chapter through the narratives of Alan Trammel and Willie Mays.) Fielders define their situation as it is presented to them by the game’s situation and the outcome of the interaction between the pitcher and the batter.

Assume that I am properly placed and the ball is hit to me. Assume that I handle it flawlessly. What must I do with it? I’m supposed to know: 1. The speed of the batter, going to first 2. The speed of all base runners. (Koppett, 1991, p. 77)

First, for the fielder to be actively involved the ball must be hit to him. He becomes the recipient of the interaction’s outcome. Second, he must handle it nearly flawlessly. This is an act of individual performance, rather than interaction. Third, he must gauge the running ability of the batter or base runner. This does not necessarily involve interaction, but knowledge, which may be either personal or presented to him prior to the game by another. Nor does this mean that the fielder must interact with the runner in the same manner the pitcher must. Again, in an interactional incident between the pitcher and the runner, the fielder is usually the receiver of the event’s outcome. Fourth, the fielder knows in which direction the batter must run before the ball is pitched. Here he has no need to interact.
3. The needs of the strategic situation: Must a potential tying run be cut off at home? At third? At second? Is a possible double play more important than the lead runner? Is the chance of throwing out the man going from first to third good enough to risk the batter reaching second? (Koppett, 1991, p. 77)

Here the fielder is interacting intrapersonally with the situation presented to him by the game. In effect, he is asking himself, "What should I do if the ball is hit to me?" Again, this is a reactive position. We should note that outfielders, centrality's noncentral players, can answer as many of the above questions as centrality's infielders.

4. My own capabilities: Where will my best play be if the ball is hit slowly? Sharply? To the extremities of my range, right and left? How much can I get on the ball throwing off balance? 5. The capabilities of my teammates. (Koppett, 1991, p. 77)

This is more intrapersonal interaction of a reactive nature. The fielder is not engaging in the creation of baseball's interaction, but aligning himself to respond to its outcome and the reactive responses of his teammates.

Also, I'm supposed to be clear about my alternatives if the ball is not hit to me. Where do I go to back up a play? What base do I cover? What sort of help can I give to some other fielder? (Koppett, 1991, p. 77)

For the field positions, whether infielder or outfielder, the responsibility is identical; to intrapersonally prepare to react to the outcome of the interaction between the pitcher and the batter, or the pitcher and the base runner. Nowhere does any fielder primarily contribute to baseball's interaction, as the interaction is constructed, enacted, and maintained through the proactivity of the pitcher and the batter, the two positions ignored by Loy and McElvogue's centrality.
In essence, Blumer would label the fielder’s behavior as the self-indicating type with a relationship of subject to object; player responding to the ball, a reactive result of the outcome of the interaction. In comparison, Blumer would classify the behavior of the pitcher and batter as one which takes each other into account and establishes a relationship of subject to subject, which actively creates a definition of the situation past the situation presented to them.

It means that the two individuals are brought into a relation of subject to subject, not of object to object, nor even of subject to object. Each person has to view the conduct of the other in some degree from the standpoint of the other. One has to catch the other as a subject, or in terms of his being the initiator and director of his acts; thus one is led to identify what the person means, what are his intentions and how he may act. Each party to the interaction does this and thus not only takes the other into account, but takes him into account as one who, in turn, is taking him into account. (Blumer, 1969, p. 109)

For an interactionist view of centrality, the interaction, formulated through ongoing action, ascertainment, gesture, and taking the role of the other, is located in a sixty foot area of the field’s diamond; the distance from the pitcher’s mound to the batter’s box. The remaining area of the playing field, the infield and outfield, is the reactive zone of the interaction’s outcome.

Outcomes of Interaction

For baseball, there are primarily eight outcomes to every interpersonal interaction: (1) the batter strikes out; (2) the batter walks; (3) the batter hits a home run; (4) the batter is hit by a pitch; (5) the batter gets a hit; (6) the batter flies/pops out; (7) the batter reaches base on an error by a fielder, and (8) the batter grounds out.
Predominately there are two positions involved in creating these outcomes, the pitcher and the batter. It is this encounter which contains the interpersonal interaction, as the pitcher attempts to ascertain, interpret, and define the situation he finds himself in with the batter. The batter, of course, is applying the same process.

The primacy of the pitching and hitting positions in this interaction is evident as a majority of the eight potential outcomes, the first five, are the exclusive result of this interaction between the two positions. The remaining field positions do not originate these outcomes, and, thus are relegated to reactive, supporting roles. Theoretically, it is possible to play an entire game without any of the field positions participating. Therefore, the primary and most frequent interaction occurs between the pitcher and batter as they take account of each other.

Taking another person into account means being aware of him, identifying him in some way, making some judgment or appraisal of him, identifying the meaning of his actions, trying to find out what he has on his mind or trying to figure out what he intends to do. (Blumer, 1969, p. 109)

Other less frequent variations of this interaction occurs when the batter changes locales and roles and becomes a base runner and continues his interaction with the pitcher. Another occurs when the manager pays a visit to the pitching mound to interact with his most responsible player.

All these interactions, pitcher and batter, pitcher and base runner, pitcher and manager, have a vital significance for the game’s centrality; they involve the most centered position, pitching, and truly qualify as a symbolic interaction.
Symbolic interaction involves interpretation, or ascertaining the meaning of the action or remarks of the other person, and definition or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act. (Blumer, 1969, p. 66)

In contrast, for the fielders, the interpretation and definition are presented to them through the structural limitations of the game, managerial instruction, and their self-indication. This predetermined combination permits them to view the batter as an object to be retired, represented by the ball, rather than as a combative subject. Their interaction is internal, a non-symbolic variety, which requires only recognition of the defined situation. Fielders are not actively involved with the symbolic interaction, baseball’s foundation, and, thus, serve as a reactive element to the outcome of the symbolic interaction.

An Interactive Example

On October 21, 1975, the Cincinnati Reds were in Boston’s Fenway Park to face the Red Sox in the sixth game of the World Series. The Reds led the series three games to two, and were leading Boston 6-3 in the bottom of the eight inning. Boston was six outs away from elimination.

But the Red Sox were not ready to knuckle under. [Fred] Lynn, who had been shaken up when he crashed against the wall while chasing [Ken] Griffey’s hit in the fifth, opened with a single. Third baseman Rico Petrocelli then was walked, driving righthander Pedro Borbon to the showers. (Reidenbaugh, 1986, p. 93)

Here Lynn, the Red Sox’ center fielder, was described as changing roles and locations. In the fifth inning, he was slightly injured while reacting to the outcome
of the interaction between Luis Tiant, Boston's starting pitcher, and Ken Griffey, the Cincinnati batter.

On the 2-2 pitch [delivered by Tiant], Griffey laced a solid line drive to center field where Lynn turned and sprinted to the 37-foot-high concrete fence. The ball and Lynn both struck the concrete at the same time, just alongside the white marker reading 379 feet, and both bounced off the wall at the same time. Lynn having lost the chase, slumped to the ground with a twisted foot. . . It took about five minutes for Lynn to get back to his feet . . . (Durso, 1975, p. 32)

For his interaction with Borbon, Lynn changed his role from a reactive fielder and became an interactive batter, as he moved from the center field portion of the reactive zone into the interactive area of the batter's box.

As Borbon left the mound, Sparky Anderson, the Reds' manager, called on his ace reliever, Rawly Eastwick. Eastwick had earned two of the Reds' three Series' wins and had saved the third. As Eastwick took the mound, the game presented him with the following situation; runners on first and second with no one out, and a three-run lead in the bottom of the eight inning.

He [Eastwick] struck out [Daryl] Evans and retired shortstop Rick Burleson on an outfield fly. His only remaining obstacle to a scoreless inning was [Bernie] Carbo, the part-time outfielder who had socked 15 homers and driven in 50 runs during the A.L. campaign. (Reidenbaugh, 1986, p. 93)

Notice how Reidenbaugh reported the action. The individual performance of Eastwick, the pitcher, was his central focus. He was able to concisely narrate the action without referring to another Cincinnati player. No fielders were mentioned because he knew the pitching and batting positions were central to the game.
Reidenbaugh also recorded Carbo’s entrance into the interactive fray by citing his performance as a batter, rather than as an outfielder. Through his account we knew that fifteen of Carbo’s interactive outcomes have resulted in home runs, and across all his seasonal interactions he has driven in fifty runs. Reidenbaugh never mentioned Carbo’s total putouts or assists. He knew Carbo’s hitting ability was central for the Red Sox. Eastwick knew this, too.

But in the home half of the eighth, everything was reversed on one pitch from Rawly Eastwick, the sixth of eight pitchers, thrown into the struggle by Cincinnati... He [Carbo] drove the ball 400 feet into the center-field bleachers for his second home run in as many times at bat. (Durso, 1975, p. 32)

Carbo racked Eastwick for a three-run homer, and the sixth game of the 1975 World Series was tied at six. Eastwick then retired the next batter to end the inning.

In one of baseball’s most commemorative half-innings, the narrative revolved around the game’s most central positions; the pitcher and the batter. It is vital for us to note that the outcome of a single interaction, one pitch by Eastwick followed by one swing by Carbo, can alter the direction of the game. Here is where the outcome of most any game is primarily determined, through the interactive encounter of these two key individual performances.

Following the game Carbo revealed what was on his mind as he entered the batter’s box:

I was telling myself not to strike out. With four days off because of all the rain, I was just trying to put the ball in play someplace. (Carbo cited in Durso, 1975, p. 32)
I was just trying to fight off everything on the inside. . . . I never faced him [Eastwick] until the second game of the Series when I struck out. (Carbo cited in Anderson, 1975, p. 31)

Here Carbo testified to the defensive nature of the batting position. As we discovered earlier, a batter's first thought is not to strike out. His second is to make contact during the interaction.

In contrast, Eastwick's reaction to his confrontation with Carbo was more offensive in nature:

It was just a terrible pitch. It was a high fastball. With two strikes, I just wanted to get it in on him, but it was out and up. (Eastwick cited in Durso, 1975, p. 32)

For this interactive battle, the offensive-minded Eastwick attempted to jam Carbo on the inside corner of the plate. Meanwhile, Carbo, who acted defensively, was determined to fight off any attempt to be jammed. This is baseball's central interaction.

The Central Positions

For an interactionist theory of centrality, the central positions in baseball are the interactive pitcher and batter, rather than Loy and McElvogue's reactive infielders. There are, of course, other contributors to the symbolic interaction, namely the catcher and third base coach. However, their roles are secondary, acting as advisors to, and reflectors of, the subjective confrontation between the pitcher and batter.

By labeling players in the field as reactive, I do not mean that all are strictly reactive across the entire game. These players become interactive participants when
they change role and location, that is, move from the role of fielder to that of batter, and from the reactive location of the field to the interactive location of the batter’s box. This latter role, the batter, and location, the batter’s box, were completely ignored by Loy and McElvogue as they only viewed players in their defensive capacity.

Therefore, I contend that all players in field positions become central to baseball when they make this role and location adjustment. They accomplish this as hitters when they engage in interaction with the pitcher. This interaction with the pitcher continues if the hitter reaches base. Here the batter again changes role and location, becoming a base runner and moving into the infield base path area.

This leads us to what should be considered the most central, or responsible, positions in baseball; the pitching and batting positions. Thus, the fielding positions must be considered non-central, or less responsible. The pitching and hitting positions are central because these are always engaged in interpersonal, or symbolic, interaction, while the other positions, when stationed in the field, are engaged in intrapersonal, or non-symbolic, interaction.

Therefore, for an interactionist theory of centrality, I suggest that centrality be redefined as an interactional layout: Baseball teams have a well defined pattern based on the degree of symbolic interaction involved among the positions divided into three interactional levels: (1) the interactionists, consisting of pitcher and batter; (2) the advisors to the interaction, consisting of the catcher to the pitcher and the third base
coach to the batter; and (3) the reactors to the interaction, the infielders and outfielders.

Of course, my interactionist view of centrality impacts upon any investigation of racial discrimination in professional baseball. How it impacts is the subject of my concluding chapter.
CHAPTER VI

DISCRIMINATION IN PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL:
AN INTERACTIONIST INTERPRETATION

An interactionist theory of centrality converts the investigation of racial inequalities in Major League Baseball from a passive racial headcount of spatial locations to an action-oriented accounting of player activity based on race across the three tiers of interaction. For interactionism, whether a player occupies an infield or outfield position is inconsequential for two reasons: (1) all fielders, regardless of spatial location, are reactors to, rather than constructors of, the outcome of the interaction; and (2) all fielders, regardless of spatial location, eventually become active participants in the interaction and constructors of the interaction’s outcome. This latter point is accomplished when the fielder changes location, moving from the field position to the batter’s box, and role, moving from a reactive fielder to an interactive hitter. Thus, for an interactionist, shortstops and right fielders are viewed in the same light, and which race occupies which field position has little meaning.

What an interactionist theory of centrality is concerned with is the racial activity at the three tiers of interaction; the interactionists, the primary level; the advisors, the intermediary level; and the reactors, the least empowered interactional level. This analysis becomes important because the levels have different degrees of power and involvement into the creation of what we know as baseball.
The first tier, the interactionists, contains the most input into the origination of the interaction and its resulting outcome, which, ultimately, defines the game itself. At this level we find the pitcher and the batter combatively interacting for supremacy, each with their own mission and goal. This is the field’s most empowered and interactive tier. Here we wish to know whether minority races are actively involved, at appropriate representation, in the creation process.

The second tier, the advisors, are potent intermediaries to the actual interaction. At this level we find the catcher and the third base coach. Both are actively involved as significant representatives of the team’s management, as they relay interactional tactics to the game’s interactionists; the catcher advises the pitcher, while the third base coach assists the batter. Here we measure the advisory activity of minority players at the second most empowered level.

The third tier, the reactors, consists of the remaining field positions and have little, if any, input into the creation of the interaction. These infielders and outfielders primarily react to the interaction’s outcome and employ their individual performance abilities for their team’s benefit. Here we evaluate minority activity at the least dynamic tier.

Thus, for an interactionist theory of centrality, racial examination is moved to minority players’ activity across the three levels of interaction. The question becomes how active are they in creating the interactional outcomes, rather than what spatial location do they occupy. To make an accurate determination of this condition, a baseline is needed for comparison, a criterion noticeably absent in most structural
inquiries. For purely illustrative purposes, I have selected a comparative percentage, based on the country’s 1991 general population, which reported that minority races represented nearly 16% of that total population (Statistical Abstracts, 1991).

Table 11 presented a racial representation of the players’ activity across the three interactional tiers. I compiled most of my data from the 1993 edition of Who’s Who In Baseball. (We should note that this annual categorized players in an interactionist’s style by listing them as "Batters" and "Pitchers", rather than by structural location.) My data relating to the third base coaching position was adapted from USA Today Baseball Weekly (March 30 - April 5, 1994). I was unable to racially identify one of the third base coaches, that is why only 27 were reported.

Tier 1 - The Field Interactionists

Overall, the interactionists (n = 879) were two-thirds white, a figure below their general population percentage. Thus, minority involvement accounted for 34% of the primary interactional level, a generally positive finding. Here minority activity was slightly more than double their percentage in the general population.

However, minority participation at this tier was largely limited to the hitting role, as nearly half, 46%, of all batters were either black or Hispanic. The large minority involvement at this activity would seem justified. As presented in Chapter Two, blacks produced more home runs and, along with Hispanics, had higher batting averages than whites, and, therefore, emerged more victorious, more often, from the interaction than white players.
### Table 11

Interactional Field Activity Tiers of Major League Baseball by Race (1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier And Activity</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 1 - Interactionists</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batters</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitchers</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 2 - Advisors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catchers</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Base Coaches</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 3 - Reactors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Base</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Base</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Base</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortstop</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outfield</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** All data, except for third base coaches, were compiled from the 1993 edition of *Who's Who In Baseball*. The data for the third base coaches were compiled from *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, (1994, March 30 - April 5), pp. 20 -53.
In contrast, whites dominated the game's most central, and powerful activity; pitching. Eight of every ten pitchers were white, a figure slightly less than their general population representation, yet a 6% decrease from 1983. Remarkably, 14% were Hispanic, a doubling from the previous decade. In 1983, according to Lapchick & Benedict (1993), 86% of pitchers were white, 7% were Hispanic, and another 7% were black.

Clearly, blacks continued to be very inactive at this crucial interactional role. Conversely, there was over four times as much black batting activity in the interaction than black pitching participation.

Beside the numerical discrepancy between white and black pitching activity, one also existed between black and Hispanic pitchers. Why were there more than twice as many Hispanics pitching than blacks? One reason might be the advent of the Mexican pitcher.

"Most of the Mexicans who come out are pitchers," said Fred Uhlman, Sr., a Baltimore Orioles scout. "A lot of Mexicans have bad foot speed. It's a genetic type thing. They have a different body type. Most all have good hands and good rhythm. That's why they dance so well. Rhythm is important in baseball, it means agility." (Beaton, 1993, p. 11)

Angel Figueroa, who scouts for Pittsburgh, said, "There are two things that are rare in Mexicans: running speed and power. That's why the majority of Mexicans who reach the big leagues are pitchers." (Beaton, 1993, p. 11)

These stereotypical portrayals of Mexican players, by those who select major league talent, reveal racist tendencies on the part of professional baseball. Black pitchers may be passed over for another minority group. However, racism may be the
symptom rather than the disease. Perhaps market economics is at the core of choosing Mexican pitchers over their black, or even white, counterparts.

Although, in Chapter II, we discovered that starting Hispanic pitchers were the highest paid among elite starters, Hispanics were also the lowest paid elite relievers (Table 7). Overall, in the general baseball population, Hispanics were the lowest paid racial group (Table 4), earning nearly $500,000 less than blacks and $300,000 less than whites. Quite possibly, economics could be the major factor accounting for the increase of Hispanic involvement at baseball's interactional tier. Perhaps Major League Baseball has quietly constructed their own version of a NAFTA agreement, reflecting the larger cheap labor trend of corporate America.

Despite all these obstacles, the possibility of more Mexicans reaching the big leagues in the future seems bright. The agreements between Mexican League teams and U.S. organizations are changing, with the U.S. teams taking a more active role in scouting with their Mexican partners. In addition, the prices for some younger Mexican prospects are low enough to make them attractive. (Jamail, 1993, p. 11)

Racism? Possibly. But, more likely market economics, market demographics, and the pursuit of profit are at the forefront. Whatever the absolute reasoning, at the interactional tier, whites are in decline, blacks seem destined to be limited to the hitting activity, and Hispanics are rising at both components of this level. If professional baseball continues to view Mexicans as profitable, blacks should remain stagnant, and the activity of the white player at the interactional level could drop even further.
Tier 2 - The Field Advisors

At the intermediary level, the advisors (n = 109), white participation was dominant. Eighty-five percent of the actors were white, while minority races accounted for 15% of the advisory activity. Both figures generally represented their respective general population percentages.

However, at this level, the same trend surfaced for catchers that was revealed at the first tier for pitchers; whites declined, blacks did not advance, and Hispanics increased at this activity.

Whites accounted for 84% of the catching action, a loss of nearly 10% from 1983. Hispanics actively represented 15% of the players behind the plate, a 100% increase over the decade. In 1983, according to Lapchick and Benedict (1993), 93% of catchers were white, while 7% were Hispanic. Meanwhile, blacks accounted for only 1% of all catching activity.

Nearly nine of ten third base coaches were white, while 7% were Hispanic. Here, again, blacks were relegated the least advisory empowerment with only 4%, one coach, engaged in this activity. (1983 figures for the coaches were unavailable.)

Tier 3 - The Field Reactors

At the third, and least powerful, interactional level, the reactors (n = 392), whites were the largest group, with 48%, but were not a majority. Here the minority races accounted for 52% of the reactionary activity, more than three times their representation in the general population, with blacks nearly representing a third. This
Table 12

Activity Comparison of Tier 3 Reactors In Major League Baseball
by Race, 1983 to 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Base</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Base</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Base</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortstop</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outfield</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


category contained the largest percentage of black activity, nearly doubling their involvement at tier one.

This interactional level revealed the same trend as the previous two; white involvement declined while Hispanic participation increased. As Table 12 revealed, when compared to 1983 figures (Lapchick & Benedict, 1993), whites lost 11% reactivity at 2nd base, 12% at 3rd base, 22% at shortstop, and 7% at outfielder. Over
the same period, Hispanics gained 15% reactive participation at 1st base, 14% at 2nd base, 27% at 3rd base, and 7% at outfielder.

In contrast, black activity only increased at 3rd base, while it decreased at 1st base, 2nd base, and shortstop. Although this is the least empowered tier, limited to reactionary involvement, it is important nonetheless as this level changes role and location to active involvement in creating the interaction as batters. Therefore, an increase or decrease at this tier is directly reflected as an increase or decrease in activity at the interactional level.

An Interactional Summary

From an interactionist perspective, whites still dominate baseball's key interactional process and activities on the field. But, this dominance has declined over the past decade as more minority involvement can be found, in general, at the strategic interactional tiers. However, this minority advancement has been limited to Hispanic gains at figures larger than their representation in the general populace.

Black players, although well represented at the batting participation of the interactional tier, were grossly underrepresented at the pitching activity of the interactional level and at both components of the intermediate advisory level.

What an interactionist theory of centrality has depicted for playing field racial discrimination studies is a movement, one that is veering away from the white player toward the Hispanic. This movement toward Hispanic players has been exemplified
by the Detroit Tigers, as this organization has increased its investment in the poverty-ridden Dominican Republic.

This season, for the first time, the Tigers will field a full 25-man squad in the Dominican Summer League, instead of sharing a team with the St. Louis Cardinals, as they have done in the past. The Tigers have rented facilities in the Dominican Republic, have hired more bilingual coaches throughout the organization, and perhaps most important of all, they have made a commitment to developing Dominican players. (Roberts, 1994b, p. B2)

According to Dave Miller, the Tigers’ director of minor league operations, signing Dominican players are a top priority.

According to Miller, most of the Dominican players the Tigers sign receive a signing bonus of anywhere from $3000 to $10,000. "And many times," Miller points out, "the players may not advance beyond A ball. You’ve signed him, but you get no results from having signed the player. But we think it’s worth the risk if we continue to get players like Lima [a pitcher] and Bautista [an outfielder]. (Roberts, 1994b, p. B2)

Of course, the signings are worth the risk. Bonuses of less than $10,000 may be defined as plenty by poor Dominican prospects, but, in reality, are small change to Major League organizations, who, in the past, have offered six-figure signing bonuses. It is not known whether the Major Leagues have similar developmental plans for the inner cities across North America.

In the meantime, the black player remained static, not sharing in the activity gains achieved by the Hispanic. Quite possibly this movement is not racist in nature, as suggested by structural examinations, but an economically-oriented drive for cheaper wage labor in a business realm consumed with cost.

An interactionist theory of centrality can also be applied to the organizational level of professional baseball. Various managerial and working activities can be
categorized according to the three tiers of interaction and the racial activity at each level can be measured. For example, Table 13 displayed the interactional organizational data for each tier. (My data was adapted from Lapchick & Benedict (1993).)

Tier 1 - The Organizational Interactionists

Again, this tier (n = 181) is the level with the most power. These groups create the interaction off the field, in a manner similar to the interaction found on the field between the pitcher and batter. However, the outcome of the interaction at this tier directly impacts upon who will comprise the interactional levels on the field.

As expected, whites dominated as they accounted for 97% of the activity at this level. A three percent minority race involvement was far below their representation in the general population.

This tier, the organizational interactionist, is the most prominent level in all of baseball, as it is the most powerful. In a very political sense, it has the ability to create the impression of a racially well-balanced organization through its visible workforce, namely the players on the playing field, yet hide its true motivation for organizational purposes. In other words, a presentation that appears to be racially correcting may be, in reality, economically motivated. This level reflects Goffman’s backstage area.
Table 13
Interactional Organizational Activity Tiers of Major League Baseball
by Race (1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier &amp; Activity</th>
<th>White</th>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th></th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1 - Interactionists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2 - Advisors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3 - Reactors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Personnel</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Office personnel includes all employees other than managers, coaches, scouts, trainers, and instructors. Data from Lapchick & Benedict (1993).
A back region or backstage may be defined as a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course. ... It is here that the capacity of a performance to express something beyond itself may be painstakingly fabricated; it is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed. (Goffman, 1959, p. 112)

In contrast, the next level, the advisory, reflects the area where Goffman's (1959, p. 111) "accentuated facts make their appearance."

**Tier 2 - The Organizational Advisors**

Tier 2, the intermediary advisors (n = 193), field managers and coaches, is the most interesting of the organizational levels. Here, too, whites dominated the activity, but minority participation exceeded their representation in the general population, as 20% of the advisory activity belonged to blacks and Hispanics.

This level is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it is basically a middle management position which has activity both on and off the field, so its interactive positioning is both front and back stage.

Second, this 20% minority activity at the advisory level is potentially more than is found at the middle management level across corporate America. This interpretation suggests a presentation of racial balance by baseball's first-tiered interactionists at a level which contains some power, but, overall, is a microcosm of the entire organization.

Third, it is interesting for us to note that the racial activity across both components of the tier were equitable. This, of course, was not the case for the same
tier at the field level. Nor is any other tier, field or organizational, so neatly divided racially. This suggests that tier 1 organizational interactionists paid a great amount of attention to the racial activity at this level. For presentation purposes? Possibly.

Fourth, a major thesis of the structural centrality theory was that minority players who were "stacked" in socially isolated noncentral positions would never be afforded the opportunity to move into an organizational activity because of their structural location on the field.

It would appear, however, that one of the major disadvantageous consequences of segregation is the retardation of upward career mobility in professional sports. . . Therefore, to the degree that Negro athletes are denied access to central positions, they are also limited in obtaining positions of leadership in professional baseball. (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, pp. 21-22)

This simply has proven to be untrue. Blacks and Hispanics have risen to the professional organizational level at percentages slightly higher than their national representation. Being "central" or "noncentral" had less to do with their current activity than the organizational's interactionist desire for a balanced presentation and appearance of upward mobility for minorities.

Is it logical for us to believe that if the interactionists desired a picture of racial harmony within their organization, they would refuse to allow a Willie Mays or Hank Aaron an activity because they played the outfield? Would they resist awarding an organizational activity to a minority former player who was qualified simply because he was a left fielder? Are not public presentation, corporate reputation, and market economics more important criteria to interactional capitalists than playing position? And, if playing position was so vital to managerial mobility,
we could conclude that most managers and coaches should be former pitchers. Pitchers are the most central of all positions and are of greater number than all other positions.

Tier 3 - The Organizational Reactors

The third interactional tier, the reactors (n = 1934), the office workers, is the least empowered of the levels. Surprisingly, it was almost all white, as minority activity accounted for only 2% of all reactor activity. This finding is curious in the sense that it is far removed from corporate America's traditional employee breakdown, where the largest number of minorities are found at the everyday operational level.

However, we must remember that the majority of the organizational reactors are backstage workers, those employees that are not presented to the public. This level becomes important for future analysis as it may contain the true racial and economic attitudes of the white-dominated organizational interactionists. Most likely the majority of the workers involved in this activity are of the low-paid variety, as nearly 40%, or 907, were women.

An Organizational Summary

Across the three interactional tiers of the organizational level, whites clearly dominated two; the interactionists and the reactors. Blacks and Hispanics were proportionally active at the intermediate tier; the advisors. We should note that of the three organizational tiers, the second, the advisors, is the most visible to public
viewing. Outside of the players themselves, managers and coaches reap more media exposure than CEOs and marketing staff members.

Perhaps this arrangement is baseball's social construction of political and economic reality; a presentation of self as a legitimizing system which converts power into authority through a self-promoted negativity. This negativity, in turn, is grasped by the public, and sociologists, as abhorrent. Then baseball enters the fray with a controlled program for correction and emerges with a publically-approved, self-proclaimed victory over the negativity which it originated.

To clarify this thought, I present a brief, hypothetical, interactionist reading of a recent racial incident in Major League Baseball.

An Interactive Reading

Following the 1992 season, professional baseball reported breaking even (Table 9). It was the first time in seven years that the Major Leagues did not turn a profit. That same season, for the first time, the average player's salary exceed $1,000,000 and blacks were the highest paid racial group. Congress was hearing arguments to revoke baseball's anti-trust status, and the owners, in supposedly baseball's best interests, still had not named a commissioner. Discussions concerning union negotiations, a potential strike, the establishment of a salary cap, and revenue sharing among teams were on the horizon. In short, salaries were up, profits were down, and owners were being scrutinized.
Also following the 1992 season Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott was accused of making a racial slur which suggested she favored trained monkeys over black players. This allegation was made by Tim Sabo, the team’s white controller. Sabo accused Schott of discrimination in her hiring practices. Schott fired Sabo and Sabo filed suit against Schott. Sabo claimed he was fired because he did not agree with Schott’s hiring practices and racial remarks.

Rather than argue the case on that point, Sabo’s lawyers dropped the $2.5 million lawsuit pending appeal of what they thought were stronger legal issues. This despite a pretrail judical ruling that Sabo was not improperly fired. (Williams, 1992, p. 3)

Apparently the lack of evidence on Sabo’s part did not deter Major League Baseball as Schott was ultimately suspended for a year by baseball’s owners in a public forum.

Let’s be clear; It was alleged, not proven, that Margaret U. Schott used the "N" word in private, non-recorded, non-public conversations. Once this charge was made by a disgruntled, white former employee (who demanded payment to keep quiet), the Grand Old Men of Baseball swung into action, causing wing-tip-shoe, cuff-link-wearing investigators to fan out over the fruited plains of America to track down PROOF that Marge did, indeed, say the "N" word. (Cunningham, 1993, p. 5)

We must remember that baseball has largely controlled its own image and business practices. Thus, baseball has been able to emphasize that it exists for the benefit of society, and not for the private gain of select members within society. It is my contention that one of baseball’s primary objectives is to promote this societal emphasis, while insuring that the private remains so.
In order to conceal their true motivation, retaining autonomous authority, baseball owners had to create their own negative event. This creation assured them of wide media coverage and allowed them to step forward with the corrective action. Thus, the Marge Schott incident, a self-imposed, dramaturgical, but artificial, negativity created an imaginary foe, an enemy within the system.

So, the dramaturgy of false negativity, opposition, and participation serve the interests of the state [baseball] and the ruling class [baseball owners] by attempting to persuade the public to believe the thesis and reality of one dimensionality - that modern capitalism exists without opposition. But once the process is viewed from the standpoint of a critical dramaturgy, the nonidentity between the public performance and public claim becomes obvious.

(Welsh, 1990, p. 401)

The negativity brought forth by Schott’s alleged comment was a natural for baseball’s owners as it played prime-time in the theater of the media. Across the nation, professional performers cast the comment as a black versus white issue. They ushered in the Reverend Jesse Jackson, the nation's most prominent and eloquent black leader, to condemn the comment as racist and to challenge the owners to correct the situation. This was done in a unique setting.

In a bizarre scene, Jackson was allowed to use the podium from which the major league trades and free-agent signings were announced - but not before Major League Baseball’s logo flag was removed from the background. . . . Also, standing behind the civil rights leader as he spoke were former major league star Dave Parker and Orioles executive Frank Robinson [both black].

(Wendel, 1992, p. 9)

Baseball’s negativity was presented dramaturgically with the front stage belonging to baseball itself. Televised news accounts, radio talk shows, newspapers, and magazines chastised Schott’s remark as racist and presented her opposition from
within the game. These media actors, usually institutional employees dependent upon baseball or its advertisers, persuaded the public to focus on Schott, while all but ignoring the industry as guilty or as the complaint’s source.

A USA TODAY/CNN poll found 29% supported reprimanding her; 23% fining her; 28% suspending her; 20% forcing her to sell team; 8% doing nothing. A Cincinnati area poll by Alliance Research found 27% supported reprimanding her; 26% fining her; 25% suspending her; 12% forcing her to sell team; 16% doing nothing. (Rains, 1992, p. 9)

This baseball-backed, media-fueled, public criticism was used to supposedly 'punish' Schott, while safeguarding the tradition, and business, of the game.

The main provision in the penalty imposed on Schott by the [baseball] executive council is that she can’t be involved in the day-to-day operation of the team, but rarely was she involved in those decisions anyway. "We don’t anticipate any large financial issues," said [Reds] general manager Jim Bowden. (Wendel, 1993, p. 4)

In effect, the punishment levied at Schott by Major League Baseball was simply a rescinding of her season pass.

Schott’s biggest involvement with the team during the season is cheering from her seat at Riverfront Stadium behind the dugout, a seat she must vacate this year. (Wendel, 1993, p. 4)

Robert Bennett, her [Schott’s] attorney, negotiated a concession allowing her to attend games, even if not in the owner’s box. (Rains, 1993a, p. 4)

Although baseball’s elites had presented Schott with a laundry list of penances, more than a year later, none had been enforced.

Apparently Marge hasn’t kept the promises she agreed to as part of settling her debt to society for making racial and ethnic slurs last year. Schott was suspended from baseball for a year, and in November of 1992, she agreed to improve the Reds’ accessibility to minorities. The unkept promises included hiring more minorities, undergoing sensitivity training and donating $100,000 to a mostly-black Cincinnati school district. (Roberts, 1994a, p. B2)
In a dramaturgical sense, this front stage performance by baseball, the media, Jackson, and the unpunished Schott effectively created and enforced a claim that was never proven, yet accepted. Its purpose, quite possibly, was to recharge baseball’s power into publically-approved authority. The public, believing it was rallying against a racial injustice committed by a wealthy capitalist, was actually serving as an agent for baseball’s reestablishment of self-rule following a season of increased costs, profit loss, and threatened regulation.

If the process of communication is two-way, the only sense in which this can be said to be the case is that the upward flow of communication, in the form of voting, public opinion polls, or letters are not effective input but are instead cues utilized by the elite for the purposes of the management of the consciousness of the people in order to maintain and extend the legitimacy of the state’s [baseball’s] power. (Welsh, 1990, p. 403)

Allowing baseball to present its own negativity to recoup its own authority through media theatrics provided the owners with three benefits. First, it permitted baseball to control the flow and content of information. For the Schott situation, specifically selected representatives were granted selected access to selected baseball agents in a relatively audience-free friendly setting, yet through a medium which reached a mass audience who could not actually participate in the dialogue. Here the back stage area remained concealed from public scrutiny, the rehearsals were hidden, and opposition to the system was presented from within the system. This latter point actually offered the system as having no opposition, as the corrective action came from within the system.
Second, the interaction between the theatrical media representatives and the system’s agents served as a forum for a mild reprimand to an unproven charge. However, what this drama clearly produced was an elicitation of a general approval to the system’s response to a reported injustice. Here baseball’s agents ‘proved’ the system was fully capable of admitting its flaws and correcting itself without outside intervention. Thus, in a time of deep turmoil for the business of baseball, the authority of baseball was regranted through its own empowered negativity.

Third, the presentation limited the focus to the racial issue, the timeless and tireless complaint charged against baseball, while it restricted any inquiry into the legitimacy of the system’s inalienable right to self-govern. This element was never an issue, as is usually the case when a self-promoted, fraudulent, political negativity finds general acceptance.

Any argument publicly advanced suggesting a political sociology of fraud seems to those who are taken captive by the captains of political consciousness as simply the ravings of a "lunatic fringe." (Welsh, 1990, p. 405)

In controlling the presentation of the negative information, the drama usually unfolds around a major actor, like Schott, rather than the organizational system itself. With their focus on the ‘guilty’ actor, actually acting as the system’s agent, the remaining owners publically paraded their benevolent racial accomplishments before a mass audience. Eventually, the spotlight fell on a stage full of positive achievements in a supposedly negative setting. Thus, the system, through a mirage of racial tension, was exonerated and escaped blame-free, while the miscast agent was theatrically flogged before a live audience as a protagonist of the black versus white
issue. Yet, baseball’s financial and legislative troubles were never mentioned. Nor did anyone seem to notice that the offensive party was a minority, the only female owner in a world of male elites.

Of course, structural centrality theorists readily accepted this convenient cultural premise, as they have for decades. For them, the issue has always been one of black versus white with none other than a purely racial motivation.

Negroes, because they are not liked by the white establishment, are placed in peripheral positions; and as a result of this placement, do not have the opportunity of high rates of interaction with teammates, and do not receive the potential positive sentiment which might accrue from such interaction. (Loy & McElvogue, 1970, p. 22, emphasis added)

For baseball, this structuralist acceptance provided the owners with a tailor-made negativity for public presentation, one which would be supported and not questioned. For sport sociology, racial investigations, from a structural analysis, was reduced to a 'science' of liking and sentiments.

A Final Thought

Clearly, we have added reasonable doubt to the belief that racial discrimination in professional baseball is solely, and simply, a black versus white issue. The stagnation of black interactional activity, the decline of white participation, and the over-proportioned increase of Hispanic interaction on the playing field may be less a pattern of outright personal discrimination and more a matter of market economics and demographics contributing to the pursuit of profit, resulting in a potentially institutional discrimination fueled by economic consequences.
With Hispanics being the lowest paid racial group, with Hispanic players receiving signing bonuses of less than $10,000, and with working agreements being contracted with Hispanic leagues, it seems fairly certain that professional baseball has joined in the cheaper wage labor crusade being enacted by American business. This movement reflects current market economics and capitalism’s obsessive pursuit for further profit.

As for market demographics, according to the 1990 census, 50% of the population in the twenty-three American baseball markets were black and Hispanic, with the latter group accounting for 20% of that total population. In five of these markets; Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, San Diego, and San Francisco, Hispanic population surpassed that of blacks, 33% to 13%. In an additional two of these baseball markets; Houston and Fort Worth, the percentage of Hispanics, 27%, nearly equaled blacks, 28%. (The 1993 Information Please Almanac, pp. 798-808)

Furthermore, 1990 Census Bureau population projections revealed that the Hispanic population will exceed that of blacks between the years 2010 and 2020. By 2020, the percentage of Hispanics in relation to the general population is expected to be 14.2% to 16.8%, and by 2050 the Hispanic proportion will rise to 20.1% to 24.8%. For the future, the Hispanic is baseball’s secondary audience.

When we consider these population statistics and forecasts, in addition to the fact that for many Hispanic nations baseball is truly their national pastime, we can conclude that baseball’s pursuit of the Hispanic player is also baseball’s pursuit of profit.
This is much more than an issue of black versus white revolving around concerns of liking and sentiments. Both black and white are the targets, one is stagnating, while the other is declining. The difficulty for sociology in recognizing this is found within the structuralist concept, as its theory and method remain frontstage, readily accepting what appears to be.

In contrast, an interactionist theory of centrality opens discrimination examinations in professional baseball beyond the structural limitations of position and racial motivation. It adds power, authority, and drama to a field which has been mired in racial headcounting, usually without a baseline comparison, for nearly a quarter of a century. It measures activity rather than space. It reveals central players instead of central locations. It recognizes the difference between performance and interaction. It brings the pitcher back in. And, it is not an accomplice to a staged presentation. In short, it is both front and back stage.


Rains, R. (1993b, April 14 - 20). Talents are there for all to see, but Bonds’ world is not. *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, pp. 36-37.


Snyder, D. (1993a, April 7 - 13). 'Ace' is an attitude as well as an era. USA Today Baseball Weekly, p. 6.


