S P O R T   A N D   C O M M U N I T Y   E M P O W E R M E N T:

Moving the Game into the Community

by

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(1986)

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies
and Planning
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of City Planning

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

May 1988

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T A B L E   O F   C O N T E N T S

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The culmination of my graduate academic career has come to fruition and this final research document reflects a good deal of the concepts, methods, strategies, ideas, that I have been introduced to during my two years at MIT. Additionally, this document also reflects a portion of the personal growth, development and enlightenment I have experienced. I must also acknowledge some of the factors that have been instrumental in my success at MIT.

Let me first thank God for the opportunity. I´d also like to thank my wife Yolonda for her help, support, advice and understanding; input from my sister Joscelyn; and friends such as Tom, Liz, Ron, and Beth.

I thank MIT staff members Mary, Kathy, Elissa, and Betty for being there. I thank my readers--Jeanne Washington, Thomas Stokes, Kenneth Geiser at Tufts University and Professor Frank Jones--for their comments and criticisms that have contributed to my development, and the refinement of this thesis. Thanks to Willie James for his time and knowledge. Last, I´d like to thank Professor Mel King for his interest, advice, guidance, and direction. He has been a prominent influence, not only during the course of this research, but during the course of my academic career at MIT.

Thank you all very much!

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SPORT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Moving the Game into the Community

by

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
on May 6, 1988 in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Master of City Planning

ABSTRACT

I am interested in exploring the connection between sport and community empowerment. My research, as documented in this paper, seeks to both explore and explain if and how sport can be used as a tool for empowerment in the Black community. My research demonstrates how sports participation by the Black community can act as the catalyst for increased participation by Black youths and their parents in community building activities that result in individual and community empowerment.

There are at least three key issues aised by my research. The first issue I raise is the issue of IMAGE in the Black community. Does participation in sport help develop self-esteem, and pride among community residents? Does this developed pride occur on an individual or on a collective basis? Second, I consider OPPORTUNITY within the Black community. Why is there a high participation rate in sport by the Black community and Black athletes, and how can sport be used in the Black community for empowerment opportunities. What other opportunities for development does participation in sport provide? Finally, I will explore ORGANIZING within the Black community through sport. Is sport a mechanism for community residents to address problems in the Black community?

Throughout this paper I hope to emphasize the need to consider new and innovative means for facilitating community development, empowerment, and consciousness raising in the Black community. Additionally, I have demonstrated that sport can play a vital role in the development of human potential.

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CHAPTER I. " THE TIP OFF "

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, a variety of different approaches have been used to try and solve some of the most crucial problems facing Black communities in America. The problems of the Black community are those related to crime, poor education, unemployment, inadequate health care, child care, racism, and deteriorated housing. Assuming this is true, I must then ask, how did these problems in the black community, become problems in the black community? Who will address these problems? What strategies will be used to help facilitate solutions to these problems in the Black community.

Seeking assistance from the Federal Government has been an often tried approach to effect positive change in the Black community. Ineffective policies initiated by the government in improving the conditions of oppressed peoples has spurred many Black communities into action, i.e., taking control over their own destinies, and control over their own institutions. Community action is an important aspect of "community development and empowerment". Community development is an educational process which leads to at least five specific areas of personal and collective growth and

empowerment. In this paper I will not discuss these five specific target areas within community development in any detail, but will look at an overall strategic approach that encompasses these target areas for both personal and collective growth and empowerment within the Black community. The five target areas effected by the community development process include: (1) economic development, (2) community control of local institutions, (3) quality education, (4) increased and better employment opportunities, and (5) access to affordable housing--all of which I consider traditional ("primary") options for survival.

Because many Black Americans have had no positive role in the economic or political life of mainstream American society, they have, and are, forced to seek alternatives, or "secondary options" for survival. I define "secondary options" as those non-traditional methods for survival such as crime (particularly drugs), the United States Military, the music/entertainment industry, and professional sports. I will show how sport can be an aid in the organization of the Black community which seeks to induce changes which benefit Black communities, which have historically been excluded from traditional American socio-political and economic institutions and systems.

Sport, much like community development, builds

self-esteem, confidence, cooperation and team work, discipline, persistence, and hard work ethics in those individuals who participate. Similarly, the creation of community individual pride, self-esteem, accomplishment, self-sufficiency, self-determination, and hope for the future are edicts of community empowerment that can be accomplished as a result of sport being used as a community organizing tool directed toward eliminating the community's problems. Accomplishment of these goals may not in themselves eradicate prejudice and racism in American society or in the world, but it will help make a positive change in the perceptions of the Black community, by both Black and White Americans, as to the individual and collective achievements of community empowerment that are attainable.

My definition of achievement and empowerment will be measured in tangible terms of self-growth and development, self-image and pride, opportunity and organization. This definition is not based on fantasies of dream careers. I define dream careers as income based on employment in sectors in which the chances for success in that industry are extremely limited--e.g., the entertainment industry.

Sport is one of those industries in which a limited number of people are able, against overwhelming odds, to achieve success or fame. Nevertheless, because sport is

pervasive throughout American society and culture, it is continually sought as an escape and as an end. Sport is so completely integrated into our society, that it impacts the economic, sociological psychological, philosophical, physiological, and historical aspects of our life; sport even has a place in art. Because I believe that sport is an integral part of American society, My hypothesis for the research of this paper is that Sport can act as a catalyst for increased participation by Black youths and their parents in community building and activities which lead to empowerment.

I can say from my own experience that sport does provide a means through which empowerment of the mind, body and soul can occur, and give someone a good and positive feeling about self. I know this because I have participated in sports both actively, through physical participation in sports leagues, and passively, by watching, for many years. The enjoyment of competition, growth, success and accomplishment (both mental and physical), and the ability to compete and win using your trained mental and physical abilities to your maximum potential (the highest form thought to be on a professional level) is the dream of most sports enthusiasts in America; both those who watch and those who play. Not unlike myself, most sports enthusiasts at

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some time in their life, dream of being in the
spotlight: hitting the winning grand-slam, making a
three pointer at the buzzer to win the game, or catching
a "hail-mary" pass for the winning touchdown. As a
result of participation in sport, I have witnessed
development and personally empowering changes within
myself, as well as with my friends as we grew and
challenged ourselves. Consequently, I have wondered if
sport can be used as a new strategy in dealing with the
problems of the Black community, and decide to research
this question.

There can be no doubt that sport is here to stay in
American society and will continue to be a major element
of American society. The reality of the prevalence of
sport in our society, is particularly true of most Black
communities in both inner cities and rural areas across
America. But how has the phenomenon of the significance
of sport to the Black community occurred, and why has
sport become so prevalent in the Black communities of
American inner cities and rural areas alike?

I assert that there are four factors which help
explain the disproportionately high involvement in sport
by the Black community, and how it has become such a
phenomenon in the Black community. They are: (1) The
legacy of slavery on Black America. Slavery has been
used to demoralized the Black American, and lessened the

slave's sense of self.

(2) The lack of full access and participation in mainstream social-economic and political systems. The Black community in America is underrepresented in politics, has a high unemployment rate, and is among the lowest wage earning population in the U.S.

(3) Continued racism and discrimination in society. Racism prevents the elimination of image stereotypes of the Black community, and in some cases prevents employment advancement opportunities.

(4) The access to high visibility and status. Status through visibility allows a person to be "approved" of and given praise by society.

This thesis will focus on the use of Sport in Community Empowerment, with particular emphasis on the Black community. The three main issues presented in this document will be analyzed in the following order. First, in section 1 of chapter I., I will present a discussion of the role of sport in the **"IGAME"** development of the Black Community. Second, in section 2 of chapter I., I will analyze if **"OPPORTUNITY"** has been made available to the Black community through involvement in sport. Third, in section 3 of chapter I., I will examine the possibility of **"ORGANIZING"** the Black community via the use of sport.

In section 1 of chapter II., I will present my

research methodology. In section 2 of chapter II., I
will show the connection between my research
methodology, and my primary hypothesis. Section 3 of
chapter II., will present my case study and its
essential elements.

Chapter III. will consist of three sections.
Section 1 will summarize my findings. In section 2 I
will draw conclusions from my research, and section 3
will identify suggestions for the future of organizing
strategies in community empowerment.

Finally, let me say that although I am focussing on
a particular population sector of American society in
which I am more familiar than others, the organizing and
empowerment strategies discussed here are adaptable to
any other community faced with defining, empowering, and
organizing itself. The precise methodology used for
empowerment will be highly dependent upon the origins of
the culture and history of its people, and based on a
history of the people that is both "organic" and
authentic unto itself.

IMAGE

Black people in America have had, and still have, a distinct and permanent status within a separate racial category that is considered by many Americans (both Black and White) to be negative. This "less than" status of the Black American is a remaining legacy of Slavery. Slavery was a means of pushing Blacks into a defined social context; an element of the general social and economic fabric but apart from it. Slavery left slaves without a positive identity, both individually and as a group. The dependency mentality created by slavery's dehumanization is an attitude based on both the mental and physical oppression, and hopelessness that has caused some members of the Black Community to accept their status as a substantial part (percent wise) of the underclass in America.

It seems to me that many Black youth have been brainwashed by images presented to them by the media to believe that they are less "human", and less intelligent than other peoples. They perceive their identity and history as meaningless because of hundreds of years of degradation and humility. Communities must identify the limiting factors of its development. For example, each community of people and culture must find its identity and find the pride of that culture in order to instill

the self-worth and self-dignity that is an essential
basis for accepting what can be accomplished as a group
of people begin to organize and become empowered.

Notwithstanding the fact, Black Americans are
perceived by most Americans to be uneducated, and this
perception presents a negative image of the Black
community. However, a great portion of people in the
Black community have sustained goals of being able to
secure steady income and have professional careers.
Ideas of having a professional career is all too often
replaced by the reality of low-wage employment and
poverty. There is an important link between low-wage
employment and education levels and opportunities,
because education (and White skin) is a prerequisite to
advancement, status, and social mobility. As a result
of poor education and racism, inner-city school systems
are failing its primary clientele--Black youth. A large
majority of the Black youth in inner-city school systems
are being graduated, but are not totally prepared for
employment in high-wage jobs in our growing high
technology society.

The lack of full access into the political and
social-economic mainstream of American society has
forced many Black youths to seek alternative or
"secondary options" for survival; options such as music,
the military, crime, and sport. According to Doris

Wilkinson and Ronald Taylor,

> "Blacks on the other hand are channeled (by
> both Black and White society) into the one or
> two endeavors open to them-sports, and to a
> lesser degree-entertainment."[1]

Primarily because of a lack of positive images (both role models and images presented in the media) and a lack of access to mainstream American systems both in and out of Black communities, Blacks in cities across the country continually protest their condition in America. The Black community began to seek alternatives to the ineffective and inactive government of mainstream America, and began to take control of their own lives and of the institutions that effect their lives.

> "a constant struggle to deal with
> discrimination and rejection. It involves
> thinking about work and alternatives to
> working. If work is to be sought, it means
> figuring out how to circumvent being screened
> out....It means having high aspirations but
> having to find ways to achieve them outside
> the mainstream."[2]

As a result, their was an intense increase in political action by the Black community during the 1960´s. By the 1970´s Black Americans had become an important political racial bloc, mainly representing the urban environment.

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[1] The Black Male in America, Doris Y. Wilkinson and Ronald L. Taylor. Nelson-Hall, Chicago: 1977, pg.171.

[2] The Black Underclass, Douglass G. Glasgow, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA: 1980 pgs.81-82.

Despite this fact, growth in positive images in the Black community, in political institutions, and in political decision making by Black Americans was not significant. This phenomenon can be measured by the relative increases in Black political representation to more substantial increases in White politicians, and the overall increase in the Black population. Instead of socio-economic and political progress, increasing into the late 1970's, many Black Americans began regressing into a cycle of poverty and into the status of the underclass; compared to where Blacks had only recently come, and compared to their White counterparts.

> "While the gap between whites and nonwhites is
> narrower in educational achievement than it
> was a decade ago, the gap in all other major
> areas--income, employment, health, and
> housing--has increased in the last ten years,
> despite the symbolic and legal gains which
> accrued from the black revolt of the 1960's"[3]

The inability of the Black community to deal with barriers to access, because of negative images and stereotypes of the Black community, into mainstream economic and political systems is further perpetuated by the lack of adequate income to meet basic needs such as housing, food, and clothing. Black economic development is hindered and even prevented by outflows of capital from the Black community. The outflow of capital--

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[3] Black Self-Concept. James A. Banks,
McGraw-Hill, New York: 1972, pg.6.

disinvestment-results in increased underdevelopment,
inequality, and lack of access to socio-economic
mobility, which promotes images of deterioration and
lack of economic vitality within the Black community.
Negative image generation usually results in outflows of
employment and capital from the Black community.
Negative perceptions of the Black community cause
investors to disinvest in, and discriminate against the
Black community.

> "...denial of credit for home mortgages and
> businesses (redlining), differential hiring
> and firing thus using blacks as cheap
> labor..."[4]

Currently, The lack of full social-economic and
political access is directly linked to the high
unemployment levels in Black communities even in regions
of the country where overall unemployment levels are
low. According to Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)
statistics from 1986, unemployment among the Black
population in Boston is currently at 14 %.[5] More Black
Americans have not advanced economically and
educationally because of the many class, gender, and
racial inequities that are historically grounded in
American culture, and continue to exist.

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[4] Black Migration and Poverty. Elizabeth
Hafkin Pleck, Academic Press, New York: 1979,
pg.6.

[5] Boston Redevelopment Authority 1986
statistics, Open Space Plan, vol. 1 (Roxbury) 1987.

The conceptual framework of my research suggests that structural factors in the historical organization of America is both directly and indirectly responsible for the development of the current growth in the underclass status of many Black Americans. Furthermore, institutional racism first initiates, and later supports, the exclusion of Black youth from the normal paths of personal achievement and career fulfillment. Consequently, there is a need to fight the social dynamics of exclusion and displacement in terms of community reconstruction, decolonization, and empowerment to prevent being forced to work in low-wage employment, or seek "secondary options", such as sport, for survival.

> "...a young man's only capital is his body. The exploitation is obvious, as is the hope. And, realistically, often the sheer lack of alternative opportunity. Historically, the Negro Baseball Leagues provided many Americans with a similar experience; a small group of talented men expanded their own horizons as they became symbols of competence and achievement and survival for all blacks."[6]

Sport provides an image of a life that is superior economically and socially to the conditions in which many Black youth in the inner-city are raised.

Non-traditional methods of survival are forms of three basic responses to racism and the lack of

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[6] <u>Beyond A Boundary,</u> C.L.R. James, Pantheon Books, New York: 1983, pgs.xi-xii.

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meaningful access into mainstream political/economic

systems. Apathy, acceptance, and aggression are

responses which have been promulgated in the Black

community. There is a need within the Black community

to deal with these feelings of ambivalence towards the

American political system by which they have been

neglected.

Aggressive responses to much needed change was

evident in the many riots that occurred in the black

communities of cities such as Los Angeles, New York,

Chicago, and Boston during the 1960's.

> "The flames that burned in Watts, the blood
> that ran in Detroit, and the Willingness of
> black leaders to chance assassination by
> taking strong public stands on social issues
> indicate that many black Americans are willing
> to pay almost any price to secure those rights
> which they believe are theirs by birthright."[7]

Many members of the Black community have become

apathetic towards bureaucracy and are resigned to the

acceptance of the status quo, i.e., negative images of

the Black community. This lack of interest and

unawareness regarding the real political issues--e.g.,

the Mandela referendum--is causing the black community

to be legislatively stroked, (i.e., taken advantage of),

by the political ink pen.

The image of the "superior" Black athlete has

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[7] Black Self-Concept. James A. Banks,
McGraw-Hill, New York: 1972, pg.6.

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contributed to a negative image stereotype which has

been impressed upon the minds of millions of Black youth

(by society) that they, because of their racial

heritage, are "natural athletes". As long as sport

provides the majority of the highly visible, high-

status, occupational role models for the masses of Black

youths, the image of Black athletic superiority over

whites, and a continued lack of opportunities for

meaningful advancement, will remain unchallenged.

Moreover, advancement of positive IMAGES through sport

will help to (1) eliminate negative perceptions and

stereotypes of the Black community; (2) help provide a

more positive image and hope for the future of Black

youths; empowered to believe that they can be

competitive in American society, and not have to resort

to secondary options for their existence; and, (3)

provide positive human images (role models) of

achievement within the Black community.

OPPORTUNITY

Sport is a dominant aspect of American society and even more so in the Black community. In general, Black athletes comprise a majority of all professional and college athletes that participate in sport in America. Not all professional sports in America are dominated by Black athletes, e.g., Hockey, Tennis, Golf, and Baseball. However, a comparison of the percentage of Black athletes in professional sports to the percentage of Blacks in America, reveals a greater proportion of Blacks represented in professional sports compared with the segment of the United States population that Blacks comprise. According to the Spring 1988 edition of Time Magazine,

> "Black athletes are dominating sport in
> America today-at least those team sports that
> attract most of our attention and our
> entertainment dollars-and there is a form of
> racial breeding at work. Not as with petunias
> or hamsters, but a kind of socioeconomic
> propagation that turns the best young blacks
> into athletic mercenaries. Many have been
> convinced since puberty that it is not one
> more turn of the page but one more bounce of
> the basketball that will get them to their
> reward."[8]

The rewards that are sought as gains through sport include immediate gratification through: substantial

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[8] Underwood, John, "On the Playground", Time Magazine, pg. 103.

economic gains, public visibility and praise, self-
esteem and pride, and an escape from oppressed
conditions of inner-cities and rural areas of the
country alike. The inticement of opportunities for
immediate gains achieved through sport have been
solidified in the minds of many Black youth as an
alternative to long years of schooling, education and
steady employment, or in low-wage and manual labor jobs.
The high visibility of Black athletic stars, and the
lack of positive Black role models not involved in sport
has contributed to the perceived necessity of sport in
the Black community.

> "Due to the high visibility of Black athlete
> role models, disproportionately high numbers
> of Black youth are channeled into athletic
> career aspirations. Also contributing to this
> channeling process is the lower overall
> visibility of Black success models in other
> high-prestige occupational categories-lawyer,
> doctor, college professor, etc. The impact of
> what would otherwise be personal career
> tragedies reverberates throughout Black
> society both because of the tremendous
> proportions of Black youth channeled toward
> and into sports and the fact that serious
> sports involvement often results in the
> neglect of other important spheres of
> development."[9]

The reality of the proportional domination of Black
athletes in professional sport has been documented by
many scholars including Professor Harry Edwards of the

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[9] The Struggle that Must Be, Harry
Edwards, MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. New
York: 1980, pg.219.

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University of California at Berkeley. Edwards has

conducted research that discloses statistics which

indicate that Black predominance in basketball and

football is increasing at a rate of 20 percent over the

last five years. At the present rate, by the year 2000

the National Basketball Association (NBA) and major

college basketball conferences will feature teams which

are almost totally Black. The National Football League

(NFL) and major college football will have the same

percentage of Black athletes that the NBA currently

exemplifies--seventy-five percent.

Some people in the Black community feel that sport

has been and still is the "primary" means for youth in

the Black community to get out of the "ghetto". Getting

out of the ghetto means escaping the oppression and the

deteriorated conditions that exist in a majority of

Black inner-city and rural communities in the United

States. For those Black people who live and survive in

the Black ghettos of America's inner-cities it is a

struggle for existence.

It has been documented that very few student

athletes successfully sustain a full-time professional

athletic career. Using professional athletics as the

goal and the primary means of "getting out" of the

ghetto is to base ones future on false hopes. According

to the Center for Sport in Society at Northeastern

University, 1.5 Million youngsters across the country play high school football and basketball each year, and less than 200 annually succeed in becoming professional athletes. Quite literally, the odds of making it to the pros are 10,000 to 1 against youngsters becoming professional athletes; thus, the chances for economic survival in America via a professional athletic career in sport is unrealistic.

Because so many athletic stars are Black and their is a disproportionately large success rate of Black youth in sport, there is a perceived affirmation that Blacks are superior athletes. However, the high representation rate of Black athletes is more a matter of a greater drive to achieve athletic success because it is seen as crucial to moving out of the inner-city and moving out of ghetto, than it is a matter of greater physical characteristics.

Therefore, success in sport is being associated with success in life. Sport approval is a learned value in which sports heroes receive praise, status and economic success. Harry Edwards states in his book, The Struggle that Must Be, that,

> "...I hadn't the slightest idea of what he
> (Edwards' father) was really talking about or
> how important sports were to him-or how
> typical he was of millions of other Black men
> in America. He believed in sports with an
> almost religious fervor. Jackie Robinson, Joe
> Louis, Jesse Owens-these were his heroes.
> They had proven that sports were "the way out

for the Negro, "the way to respectability,
acceptance by white folks, and most of all,
the way to make money, to own something-"the
only thing that matters in this country," as
my father used to say. He believed that in
sports there was the opportunity for instant
rags to riches for all willing to pay the
price..."[10]

Black youth are often introduced to sport at an
early age primarily by their parents, by the media, and
by their peers. This early introduction to sport can be
beneficial to Black youths if it allows them an
opportunity to travel and to become exposed to other
areas of this country, and if they learn to work hard as
a team. But more importantly, sport should be used to
allow youth an opportunity to receive a college
education. Education should also be stressed as an
integral part of any sports program.

Deferred economic and social gratification achieved
through traditional means such as education has
increased the appeal for social mobility opportunities
and rewards that involvement in sport offers.

It has been historically documented that those
groups that have the least access into mainstream
America have sought out various alternatives to their
condition of poverty. Their is a history of involvement
in sport by those groups of people who are, and have

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[10] Ibid., pg.72.

been, excluded from the mainstream of America. For
example, according to Paul Hoch in his book, <u>Rip off the</u>
<u>Big Game, the Exploitation of Sport by the Power Elite</u>
he states,

> "...it is useful to recall to what extent our
> professional sports have traditionally been
> aimed at potentially restless minority or
> disadvantaged groups, whether as spectators or
> players. It is well known, for example, that
> a disproportion of American football players
> (and the first professional football fans)
> have come from the coal and steel towns of
> Pennsylvania.....American basketball has long
> been the sport of the big-city ghettos, with
> the sizable proportion of the top professional
> players now coming from the streets of New
> York's Harlem ghetto. The same holds for
> American boxing and professional wrestling.
> These sports have traditionally formed the
> spectator pastimes of newly arrived immigrant
> groups and lately of the racially oppressed
> Black and Latin population."[11]

The Black community, be it low, moderate, or upper
income continues to be a viable community which requires
opportunities to meet the needs of its people.
Opportunity can arise, in part, out of the Black
community's defining itself in terms that represent its
true spirit and being; e.g., control over those
institutions which directly affect the community.

As I stated earlier, sport is seen by Black youths
as an opportunity for them to ride an escalator up to

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[11] <u>Rip Off the Big Game,</u> Paul Hoch,
Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, New
York: 1972, pg.20.

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the rewards that await. However, hope in a professional athletic career exclusively does not consider the possibilities on how sport can also provide opportunities for jobs. Spin-offs from the use of sport as a mechanism that provides opportunities for people in the Black community can be linked with interest by Black youths to become involved in sports journalism, sports photography, sports broadcasting, and sports medicine, while they are still in high school and college.

The possibilities for access to these spins-offs are often much greater for former athletic stars. For example, Jesse Owens became a radio disc jockey and a businessman; Jim Brown became an actor; Ernie Barnes became an artist; Alan Page and attorney; and Bill Russell became a broadcaster, NBA coach, and a General Manager of a professional sports franchise.

Sport can lead to opportunities for (1) jobs and stable employment, (2) education as a result of athletic scholarships to college, and (3) individual and collective achievement and empowerment within the community.

Sport can be redefined and can be one alternative
for its re-use, particularly within the Black community
because of its prevalence there. Therefore, I find it
logical to restructure the intent, the use, and the
community definition of sport that is particular to the
community, and adds an additional dimension to its use.
Is one of the alternative uses of sports its use as a
tool for self/community empowerment, and if so, how?

Based on my research, and existing theories of
community empowerment, it seems to me that there is a
systematic sequence of events that define terminology
and the concept, i.e., the progression from betterment
to development to empowerment and organization.
Included in the process of discovering and answering the
question of the potential use of sports in community
empowerment, I will also be defining the concept of
self/community empowerment.

For the sake of conducting a manageable research
question I have focused my energies, more specifically,
toward the understanding of ways in which participation
in sport by Black youths can act as the catalyst for
increased participation of Black youth and their parents
in community organizing and community building
activities that lead to community empowerment and

organization. But what is community, what is
empowerment and what is sport?

The key elements of "community" make a distinction
between "community" versus "the community" or
neighborhood versus community. "The community" or
neighborhood is the physical locale of a geographic area
within a municipality. "Community", on the other hand,
represents a group of people with common interests,
goals, values, concerns, and needs.

In the book, The Nature of Community, the concept
of "community" is defined by the author as having at
least two major elements. The first concept consists of
the community functioning as a grassroots organization,
and the second is that the community is based on the
culture of the people that constitute the community.
This concept of community requires the functioning of
the local community within the larger context of
American society; as such the local community is a
functioning element of a grassroots community based
organization. The term "community" itself emphasizes a
combining of common habitat, common concerns, and common
culture that makes a positive contribution to the
quality of life at the level of the community which has
a unique and a distinguishable form and character.

The second concept, considers more directly the
importance and power that culture provides to a people´s

concept of community. The community organization process contains distinctive elements that may, in addition to other factors, arise from the community's particular geographic and demographic features which constitute the uniqueness of the cultural heritage in each particular community.

The community is an organizational structure supported by the commonality of goals that emanate from a collective use of space (geographically), and provides members of the community with both individual and collective identity, as the local community seeks to achieve autonomy and self-sufficiency.

> "Community development is concerned with problem-solving. People have problems, particularly the American oppressed poor, and specifically the black American. These problems range the spectrum of types and degrees of complexity."[12]

The ability of the Black community to have autonomy, to decide what is best for itself, and to have responsibility to manage those decisions is what empowerment is about. Community empowerment stresses the educational process as a means to identify questions of resource allocation within the community. It also seeks to educate people, and to establish a forum for

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[12] Black Community Development, William M. Harris, R and E Research Associates, San Francisco, CA: 1976, pg.23.

community residents to discuss common problems and shared goals, to exchange ideas, to debate issues and to collectively work out reasonable solutions to their problems.

Community empowerment and development usually designates a singular policy approach, and techniques which rely upon local communities as units of political and social action. These community units attempt to combine government assistance with organized local self-determination, and they seek to stimulate community initiative and leadership as the primary instrument of social change. The use of sport as an organizing tool in community empowerment addresses some fundamental elements such as: a more unified community, an increased sense of community pride, and citizen initiative for the achievement of specific goals and programs have occurred. Organization and unity within the community seeks to help community residents gain a better understanding of each other and of the American systems that have contributed to the problems of the community through cooperative means. These elements will be more fully illuminated through the details of my case study in the next chapter.

There is also a question of who has power, and who has the ability to be an effective, and "empowered" organization. Empowerment is a term used for the

process by which communities gain, take, or force change
in the power structures affecting people on a local or
"grassroots" level. Author Robert L. Judd, Jr. defines
empowerment as,

> "to provide for more of their own vital needs;
> founded in the respect for the environment and
> for human self-determination."

Empowerment represents the esprit de corps in the
community and its ability to maximize the possibilities
for human fulfillment via learning and making positive
changes in one's self and in the community; to better
one's self in some way - enlightenment.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines sport as "a
pastime; physical activity engaged in for pleasure;
play, frolic, or fun. According to author Richard
Gruneau,

> "At some point play touches all of us. We play
> for fun, for fantasy, for excitement. In some
> cases our play seems spontaneous and freely
> innovative. In other cases it is more
> regulated and orderly. Yet, no matter what
> form it takes, there is a sense in which play
> often appears to transcend the practical
> affairs of everyday life. In play we seem to
> be absorbed in a reality that has its own
> limits of time and space, its own purposes and
> special emphases. Play allows us to be
> totally frivolous about important things in
> our work-centered lives or to be completely
> serious about things that are trivial. In
> either case, because we so deeply enjoy such
> apparent freedom, we are prone to celebrate
> play's expressive qualities and creative

autonomy."[13]

Sports occurs on various levels. There is sport as it was initially intended as demonstrated by the definition presented above; on a recreational or less-competitive level. Sport also occurs on the more familiar competitive level, that is highly structured and organized, this includes High schools, colleges, professional athletics, and Little Leagues. These organized sports become even more beneficial to Black youth when coaches, parents, and teachers act as mentors which encourage self-confidence, provide discipline, and someone for youth to talk to. The use of both professional and amateur sports, and the athletes that participate, has been exploited. The lure of the glamour, the prestige, and the money in professional sport has led to the educational emaciation--starvation of the mind, the exploitation of athletes, and the imbalance of athletic development, to educational development.

In addition to sport being fun, it is often being used to quantify a persons self-esteem and self-image by the number of points a person can score, the number of touchdowns run, or the number of home runs hit; this becomes impressed into the minds of Black youth. This

[13] Class, Sports, and Social Development, Richard Gruneau, The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA: 1983, pg.20

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is the type of exploitation of athletes that Professor Harry Edwards has documented. When sport is used in combination with education or a community activity, it can be used to create positive affects on Black youth, and to bring people together to talk in a social atmosphere. This can in turn be used to organize the strengths of the community to accomplish other goals and issues, and make changes that currently have negative effects on the Black community. Sport can play a vital role in the development of human potential, and create a resurfaced avenue that leads the Black community towards the unification necessary to begin to address its problems. The realization of "why" the Black community is faced with problems of crime, unemployment, poor education, and substandard housing, is an important step in educating people and implementing a strategy for change in the Black community.

One would hope that the discussion of "how to gain access" into the American political/economic systems would seem to be unnecessary at this stage in American history. However, it is well documented that discriminatory acts are preventing Black people from becoming full participants in mainstream American systems. Learning how or what one can do to participate more fully in our society is one of the main objectives of self/community betterment/development and

empowerment.

First, betterment is development. When you develop
your talents you have in some way bettered yourself and
when you better yourself you have developed; it´s
cyclical. For example, on a physical level, someone
decides to lift weights as a way to increase strength
and muscle. That person has developed muscle and has
become empowered to better his or her ability to move
greater amounts of mass; the person feels different--
stronger, healthier, and prouder--that is self-esteem.

Second, self development is community empowerment
because each individual "self" is part of the whole; the
community. For example, if a community wants to effect
a positive legislative change within a municipal
structure, then someone needs to learn and understand
how that process occurs. As that person engages in the
process, they gain knowledge of how the political
process operates and can be affected. This newly
empowered person can more effectively work with her/his
community to affect change; the community has developed
or increased its pallet of alternatives for action.

I am discussing development and empowerment in terms
of knowledge and learning gained. Learning does not
only apply to a formally structured institutional
environment, but it also takes place on game courts and
playing fields, at community meetings, and organizing

around a cause. Learning, development, empowerment must begin to take place on a tangible level, in a systematic way, and at an early stage in Black youths' development. Learning skills that allow a person to function effectively in all aspects of life is key in being able to survive politically and economically, and succeeding in America.

Organizing the community goes beyond the tool used, sport, and leads to (1) empowerment of the community through knowledge learned, (2) a more positive image of the community and better feelings created about an individuals' self-esteem, and (3) the opportunities presented to the individual or the community that may not have otherwise been presented if sport were not used as a mechanism to organize the community.

CHAPTER II.   " CALLING THE PLAY "

METHODOLOGY: THE CASE STUDY METHOD OF RESEARCH

As I began to consider the various research
methodologies available to me, I realized that my
research methodology must capture the essence of my
research question and how that question relates to
existing conditions in American society. How could I
best examine the ramifications of an innovative program
that builds an organizational structure for community
empowerment in the Black community? I found that the
best research methodology for analyzing the nuances of
sport in the Black community and strategies for
community empowerment, could best be facilitated by the
case study approach.

The case study method of analysis is considered to
be most appropriate when there has been limited previous
research on the particular subject. It is also used as
an exploratory device for the testing of innovative
concepts, ideas and processes which are crucial to the
investigation of these three elements.

There are three types of case studies; exploratory,
descriptive, and explanatory. I am employing a
combination of exploratory and explanatory case study
methods in which I am determining if event "x" has led

to event "y", and how and why these events have
occurred. More specifically, has sport in the case
study community led to increased empowerment and
community building activities?

Interviews, and analysis of documents are often
used, if necessary, to help establish links between
occurrences (facts), and need not always include direct
detailed observations as a source of data collection.
Case studies explain the direct relationship between
data collected, real-life situations, and the
conclusions to been drawn from data that is generally
too complex to be explained by a survey or other forms
of highly empirical data collection and research
strategies. They also describe the real-life context
and richness in detail of events which explore
situations in which these circumstances sometimes have
no clear and direct outcomes. "How" and "why" outcomes
occur as questions requiring answers that must be traced
over time, rather than by mere frequencies or incidents;
that is a distinct advantage provided by the case study
method of research.

Three additional benefits of the case study method
of research as espoused by author Robert K. Yin are: (1)
its examination of contemporary phenomenon and real-life
events, (2) its systematic and logical sequence of
events that illustrate the methodology of how the

process progressed from here (your question) to there (your conclusion), and (3) it requires no control over behavioral events. However, the case study methodology does receive some criticism.

Some social science researchers have identified expressed criticisms/disadvantages of the case study method of research. They are as follows: (1) ease of bias in research, (2) no scientific generalizations are easily identifiable, (3) they take too long to research and result in large documents, and (4) questions such as what, who or where, how many, or how much are not answered by case studies; surveys are better for these questions.

Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and hypotheses. The case study, like an experiment, does not represent a "sample" and the investigative goal is to expand upon and generalize theories. They are representative of analytical research as opposed to statistical research.

The key elements of case study research should include: (1) a study's question, (2) its propositions or hypothesis, (3) its unit(s) of analysis (data), (4) the logic linking the data to the proposition, and (5) the criteria for interpreting the findings. Cases contribute to the understanding of individual, political, organizational, and social phenomenon.

The Orchard Park case study examines the individual
story of one man, and the complicated social and
community-wide real-life circumstances in which he and
the community functions. Case studies allow for the
retention of real-life events in the understanding of
social phenomenon, while seeing how social change can
occur.

METHODOLOGY: HOW TIED TO RESEARCH TOPIC

Currently, the obvious connection between sport and
community empowerment and their roles, perceived or
real, within the Black community has limited academic
documentation. Because the literature in this field is
limited, I chose to find and to examine the key elements
of a model that has been successful in using sport as a
means to create a positive image of the Black community,
provide opportunities to people in the community, and to
organize and build community.

As I have noted earlier in this paper, sport has
been viewed as having paramount importance in the Black
community in particular. But sport is also important
for the basic merits that it offers; visibility, self-
esteem, and mobility. This is supported by the
following excerpt.

> "...sport participation...is determined by
> elements of commitment such as fun and

pleasure, (intrinsic rewards), pride, approval, health and other extrinsic rewards, social solidarity, and the attempts to maintain a positive identity."[14]

Community empowerment offers a chance for community members to learn and educate themselves. However, the existence of American racism has forced the Black community to be creative in developing a distinct Black culture. There are several reasons for the need of the Black community to have an identifiable Black culture. A strong Black culture that has originated from a commonality of experience has provided the Black community with symbols, meanings, and values which had previously not been addressed elsewhere in American society.

As part of the research in the study of sport and community empowerment, I find it important to briefly identify Black lifestyle and culture, as a basis in determining why sport is so pervasive in the Black community. This uniqueness of Black culture and lifestyle has allowed the Black community to express and define themselves in ways that are acceptable to the community; the creation of an image.

"...lifestyle is defined as the manner in which a given people uniquely pursue the management of their lives. It includes consideration of how they individually and

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[14] Sociology of Sport, edited by Susan L. Greendorfer, Leisure Press, West Point, New York: 1981, pg.115.

collectively earn a living; how they relate to
each other; how they celebrate in their
organized and unorganized rituals; how they
define and operationalize their values and
beliefs; how they spend their leisure time;
how they go about doing things that are
characteristically the same as or different
from other cultures. These practices combine
to form a lifestyle for each people
distinguishable from others."[15]

A representative case study, such as the Orchard
Park case, provides a model for the potential innovative
use of sport as a community development and empowerment
tool.

The increasing decline in the unity of the Black
community is due in large part to the ideology that in
America, it´s everyone for himself, is disclosed by
comments like, "I got mine, you get yours" are somewhat
typical. This increase in individualism is a response
to learned American values.

> "...Sitaram and Cogdell cite individuality as
> a fundamental American value shared by many
> whites and blacks. ...The individual is the
> center. ...In the U.S. blacks have adopted the
> value of individuality which essentially
> advocates taking care of one´s own personal
> needs first, a sharp break with the African
> extended family concept. Taking care of one´s
> personal needs often can mean taking something
> from someone else, even from another member of
> the family. It can mean taking things to
> satisfy primary, secondary and even tertiary
> needs,..."[16]

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[15] Black Communication in White Society,
Roy Cogdell and Sybil Wilson, Century Twenty-
One Publishing, Saratoga, CA: 1980, pgs.88-89

[16] Ibid., pg.28.

The reality of the need to do whatever it takes to survive has fostered a growth in an individualistically oriented mentality and not a mentality of community. Sport has been available to Black youths as a temporary escape from the reality of the conditions for survival; opportunity for change and advancement.

> "But what is the fall-back position of those blacks who have dedicated their lives to achievement of a professional sports career? Where do they apply their dribbling, passing, running, and tackling skills once the professional sports career eludes them?"[17]

In order to determine the connection between sport and community empowerment, I decided to employ a case study method of research, and a primary interview with someone active in community development and sport organizations. In the next section of the paper, I discuss the details of the case study, what the case means to the potential use of sport in community empowerment, and the key elements of the success of the Orchard Park Neighborhood House; community organization.

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[17] The Struggle That Must Be, Harry Edwards, MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. New York: 1980, pg.220.

THE CASE: ORCHARD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE - ROXBURY, MA

After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the devastation and destruction of the South after the Civil War, the Southern agrarian economy was destroyed. Blacks migrated from the rural South to the urban industrial North in significant numbers after the Civil War. Many newly freed Black ex-slaves, now sharecroppers, heard that they could obtain a higher standard of living and face less discrimination in the Northern States. This general belief was the motivating force that helped to draw Blacks from the rural South to a new way of life in the North.

> "Southern migrants were much more pulled to
> Boston than pushed out of the South. They
> came because they had heard that jobs were
> plentiful..."[18]

The jobs that the new migrants had heard about in the Northern Cities were often not available to them once they arrived there. In fact, segregation in late nineteenth-century Boston increased.

Consequently, Blacks people were often forced by those who control the means of production, to accept jobs as sailors, waiters, janitors, porters, and as laborers. Blacks often faced discrimination in the

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[18] Black Migration and Poverty, Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, Academic Press, New York: 1979, pgs.63-64.

North and were subjected to living in the most

deteriorated sections of the city, (the South Cove dock

area and on Beacon Hill) close to work.

> "In the nineteenth-century northern city
> blacks lived near the docks and warehouses,
> close to the central business district, and
> within walking distance of hundreds of shops,
> factories, and offices."[19]

However, during the late nineteenth-century Black

laborers and the Black community at large did not

experience a growth in either their economic status or

personal income levels.

> "...black economic progress did not fit the
> model of even the most limited example of
> nineteenth century immigrant advance, that of
> Irish Bostonians. Why not? Dozens of
> difficulties in city life have been cited as
> the sources of racial inequality: dead-end
> jobs, inferior schools, ghetto residence,
> broken families, the multifaceted forms of
> racial discrimination."[20]

As an increased interest in reinvesting in this area and

residential desirability was realized, the Black

community in Back Bay and Beacon hill were then

displaced from this area. The displaced Black community

resettled in already deteriorating poor and working

class sections of the South End and Roxbury. As more

Blacks moved into Roxbury and as the physical conditions

of the neighborhood continued to decline because of

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[19] Ibid., pg.4.

[20] Ibid., pgs.7-8.

suburbanization and disinvestment, the existing Jewish community began to move out.

By the 1970's urban renewal had physically and socially destroyed the neighborhood and the unity of the community which had a legacy which continues even today. Many sections and community groups in Roxbury are still trying to recuperate from the devastation of urban renewal and many other social ills in the Black community that have been previously identified.

Nevertheless, there is at least one community social service agency that is attempting to combat and correct the problems that the Black community in Roxbury is facing. The agency that I have identified is the Orchard Park Neighborhood House.

The Orchard Park Neighborhood House, located at 36 Dearborn Street in Roxbury; adjacent to Orchard Park public housing development. Orchard Park Neighborhood House serves the Orchard Park and Dudley East sections of Roxbury, and is a satellite social service agency of the Lena Park Community Development Corporation (CDC). Lena Park CDC is located at 150 American Legion Highway in Roxbury adjacent to Franklin Park. The building which houses the Lena Park CDC was formerly known as Hecht House, and has a history that parallels its current use. (For history of Lena Park see appendix)

The staff at Orchard Park Neighborhood House has

been successful in establishing a base of community members which will serve as the nucleus to begin organizing and uniting the Orchard Park community. The staff stresses education during pre-school ages; they believe in teaching youth how to learn and survive by building the mind.

The Orchard Park Neighborhood House is established as a social service agency which extends itself into the local community. The services provided to the community include: counseling, job training, adolescent counseling for problems such as (education, delinquency, and peer pressure), elderly programs, housing, day care and education, and the role of a "big brother" in the community. Sport was used as the initial element of unification, community involvement, and community activities by community residents, which then lead to the creation of organized community task forces to address specific issues, like drug abuse, in the Orchard Park community.

The background behind the establishment of Orchard Park Neighborhood House is one that is both encouraging and disconcerting. Back in 1978 The Dorchester Federation House occupied the city owned building that currently houses Orchard Park Neighborhood House. Because of the high cost of maintaining the building, Dorchester Federation House and the city of Boston began

transferring ownership of city owned recreation
facilities to various well established neighborhood
groups. The Orchard Park property was transferred to
Lena Park CDC. The building was used initially for
social service programs and community meetings only.
After two or three years the previous director at
Orchard Park saw that more services were needed;
recreation, day care, and education. As a result, Lena
Park turned its goals towards these additional needs.

The Orchard Park Neighborhood House has been in
operation and at its present location since 1978, with a
total enrollment of twenty children in after school
programs. The current director of the Orchard Park
Neighborhood House is Mr. Willie James. Mr. James came
to Orchard Park as a staff person in 1980. He has been
successful in increasing local community participation
in community building activities, e.g., community task
forces. However, he is still not able to reach out and
act as a safety net to catch those youth who fall
through cracks in the inner-city school system, and
those not interested in sport or the community. The
road to success has been one full of pot-holes in which
no clear road map for effective travel and progress has
been provided.

Lena Park needed a new director for Orchard Park.
In 1981 Willie James was hired as the new director for

Orchard Park Neighborhood House. He started with twenty

kids in one after-school and week-end social club for

pre-teens at the center; 15 girls and 5 boys. One of

his first requests was for additional staff. Mr. James

requested additional funding to support the hiring of

two part-time staff from Lena Park. He started a club

for the youth that functioned as a support and social

organization for them. The kids made suggestions for

activities in which they wanted to participate. The

word got out that there was a place in the community

where youth could go and spend time after school, have

fun, and stay out of trouble. Within six months the

club had grown from 20 to 70 youths. Mr. James went

back to Lena Park to negotiate for additional funds to

hire another part-time staff person; the program kept

growing.

In 1983 proposition 2 1/2 cut municipal taxes,

which in turn cut budgets for social services and

recreation programs. That meant that many gymnasiums

were closed or had limited hours of operation. The

physical condition of the building was poor and

substantial rehabilitation was required in order for it

to be operational; the floors of the gym were buckled

and the roof was worn. The gym was a hangout for

teenagers; it was where they met to talk and to play

basketball on the buckling parquet floors.

Lena Park officials, despite community opposition, closed the gym for repairs. While the rehabilitation process was ongoing, kids would break in every night and hang out in and vandalize the building. The Lena Park administration decided that if they were ever going to finish rehabilitation of the building, they would have to board up the building to keep the kids out, and they also hired an unarmed security guard to remain on the premises. Some of the teens in the local neighborhood were not dissuaded by the boarding up of the building and they, continued to vandalize the building; eventually the unarmed security guard was chased from the gym. An armed guard was then hired to replace the previous guard and to secure the property from any further vandalism.

Mr. James tried to talk to some of the local kids to discourage them from going into the gym during the night because there was now an armed guard on the premises, and the gym would be open the first thing in the morning. Unfortunately, the warning went unheeded by some of the youth in the community.

Once again, the kids broke into the building shortly after 9 p.m. to hang out and to play basketball. But instead of the boarded-up building providing the usual hangout, it became the stage for a melancholy drama. A scuffle ensued with the armed security guard and he

fired his gun in self defence. On March 19, 1982, sixteen year-old Jeffery Robinson of Orchard Park, was shot and killed; this would prove to be a turning point in the drama for establishing either a successful, or a failed relationship between the local community and Orchard Park Neighborhood House.

For a time after the incident, there was limited contact between the local community and Lena/Orchard Park officials. It was necessary for Mr. James to respond quickly to the community and more importantly, to address the community youth after this incident. Willie James felt like any of us would feel; unprepared to deal with the potential violence in, and separation of the community. He knew that the road ahead of him would be difficult, but he didn't know how difficult. His life was threatened because the local community felt that he was responsible because he hired the armed security guard. He began to question himself and his success within his position and career. Nevertheless, he knew he had to do something to help pull the community back together ...but what? Who would listen? Shortly after the shooting had occurred, a friend of Mr. James called and asked if he had ever thought about starting a flag-football team. He recommended that Willie observe a Dorchester flag-football team in action and asked if he would consider starting a team at

Orchard Park.   That Sunday morning after Mr. James had

received the telephone call from his friend, he went to

observe the team in Dorchester.

Mr. James returned to Orchard Park and asked his

secretary to print up a flyer announcing that Orchard

Park Neighborhood House had decided to start a flag-

football team as a way of bringing the community back

together; the football team would be the salve that

would be applied to begin the healing process.

At first, only a few youngsters showed up, but

gradually the numbers increased. After a few days of

soliciting community support for his idea, Willie had

six teams with fifteen participants each; all school age

boys between the ages of six and twelve. Willie James

bought flag-belts for the boys with funds from the

Orchard Park Neighborhood House and distributed them to

the youngsters. With flag-football as the focal point,

the community's cohesiveness actually began to develop.

The community residents began to rethink and reassess

their perceptions of Mr. James. Because they could see

that he was doing something positive in the community,

the residents began to think that he wasn't such a bad

guy after all.

Now that the neighborhood kids were involved,

Willie tried to get the parents of the kids more

involved in the community. So, at the conclusion of the

flag-football season Mr. James had an awards banquet in which all the children would receive an award. However, he warned parents and players, no child would receive an award unless his or her parents were in attendance. Among those at the dinner were Dennis and Ida Robinson, the parents of the teen who was shot and killed, whose twin sons Derrick and Eric were on one of the football teams. Additionally, tenant task force leaders came to show support for the awards banquet and the football teams.

With the community now supporting him, Mr. James began to spend up to fifteen or sixteen hours a day at Orchard Park Neighborhood House--from six o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night. Most of his time, and the rest of the staff's time was consumed with the renovation of the gymnasium. The City of Boston, Parks and Recreation Department, also contributed by spending $45,000 to help in the repair of the gym.

By the time the staff and Willie James finished renovating the gym, the community believed that Lena /Orchard Park was actually a human services agency that really cared about what occurred in the community. Because of the hard work and dedication to the betterment of the Orchard Park community, by people at both Lena Park and Orchard Park, the relationship between the community and Orchard Park Neighborhood

House grew.   Consequently, the relationship between the

Orchard Park community and Lena/Orchard Park has

escalated since those troubled times in 1982.

The community's cohesion, and the success of the

Orchard Park Neighborhood House would not have been as

successful in community building activities without the

community's eventual involvement in sport.   The youth

from the community who participated on the team drew

their parents into the community organizing process by

their own involvement; that is community organizing and

unity.

Most of the parents in the community are more than

just spectators on the sideline; they are often involved

in team affairs.   The youngsters seem to be an extension

of their parents.

> "Players, like the whole team, are collective
> possessions of the community... The single
> exchange of first names and pleasantries on a
> regular basis may become a participator social
> contact that makes for a sense of integration
> or leads to actual integration in the
> community."[21]

As the director of Orchard Park Neighborhood House,

Mr. James has tried to emphasize that it's what you do

and how you treat people outside the building (the

community) that counts, and to make sure as much as

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[21] Sociology of Sport,   edited by Susan
L. Greendorfer.   Leisure Press, West Point,
New York: 1981,   pg.168.

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possible, that people are getting the maximum out of life that you can help them attain. Make sure that you get involved with the community because you sometimes have only one chance to help or influence people in the local community. Orchard Park tries to make most of its decisions about new or existing programs at Orchard Park Neighborhood House (OPNH) with input from community residents. Residents from the Orchard Park public housing development, and parents of the young athletes on the OPNH flag-football teams are often part of a team of people, which includes the staff at Orchard Park, who make decisions and brainstorm to generate ideas for new or potential social service programs to be implemented at OPNH.

Mr. James believes that decisions and stated needs should come from the community. The community is included in decision making and is provided with a forum to express and share ideas, and to put any issues in which they have concerns about, out in the open. Mr. James has seen the positive results generated by the good feelings that occur as a result of being able to have a say in what occurs in the community; they feel important and that is what decision making and empowerment is about. Mr. James feels that his job is to listen to the community in order for the programs that are established to be effective as part of a

successful team; that is community empowerment.

This team is also involved in researching existing programs to determine (1) their potential helpfulness to the community and, (2) the programs acceptability and accessibility to the entire diversity of the local parents and to their children.

The Orchard Park community is a diverse community consisting of Haitians, Jamaicans, Hispanics, Blacks, Whites, and Cape Verdians. As one could imagine, this sometimes presents a language barrier between the various groups who speak either Spanish, Cape Verdian, French, or English. OPNH has received aid from the Boston Housing Authority to sponsor programs within the center that are available only to public housing tenants; OPNH serves a public housing population of approximately 7,000 people. Even though Mr. James has used sport as a means of bringing the community together. He also understands the value and importance of quality education. Willie himself was one of the top baseball prospects coming out of high school in the state of Virginia. He, like many other Black youth, was faced with an important decision with regard to sport.

Willie first became interested in sport when he met Jackie Robinson in person when he was in the first grade. Jackie Robinson was on a tour with the "Black International Baseball Players" and came to his home

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town in Downsville, Virginia in 1950. At the time,
Willie was five years old and was a bat boy at the
baseball game. That day, Jackie told Willie that he
should be a baseball player and from that day on it was
Willie's goal to play professional baseball. He watched
Jackie on television and played in every baseball league
he could all the way to high school. As a result of his
hard work, he was the number one player in the state of
Virginia by the time he graduated from high school.
Willie was faced with making a decision between a four
year baseball scholarship to Norfolk State University,
or a $10,000 professional contract with the New York
Mets. Willie lived with his grandparents at the time,
and they were unable to help him make the best decision
because they were economically deprived, and to someone
without much money, the money offered to you by a
professional sports team was thought to be a once in a
lifetime opportunity.

Quite naturally he did what most poor youth would
do, and signed the contract with the Mets. He felt that
he would then be able to financially help his
grandparents, and help himself out of the depressed
rural environment in which he had been raised. Baseball
offered him a rare chance to grow beyond his immediate
environment, to travel, and to see and experience things
new to him. His travels took him to the Caribbean,

Costa Rico, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela.

However, in 1966 he injured his right shoulder, his throwing arm, sliding head-first into second base while still in the minor leagues. By the start of the next season in 1967 his arm had not responded to treatment. He was unable to throw as he had before the injury, so in 1967 the Mets wrote him a letter saying that he had been released.

Willie first went home to Virginia and later came to Boston in 1968. He enrolled at the Occupational Resources Center (ORC) on Dudley Street for job training to further his education. Hind sight is 20/20; If he knew then what he knows now he says that he would have gone to college and worked to get a degree. He told himself that if he ever had the opportunity to talk to kids about sports and getting an education and help them to do both, he would. He would never tell a kid, no matter how much money, to sign a professional sports contract, but would instruct them to go to college. He more fully understands what the relationship between sport and the need for education is all about, but as a kid he didn't. He now is in a position to talk to kids and tell them about the advantages and disadvantages of sport, and more importantly, to help children make those kinds of decisions.

Willie James and the OPNH has used sport as a way

to not only organize and unite the community, but can also be used (on occasion) to get involved with a _family_ to find out why a kid isn't allowed by his/her parent to participate in sports. Maybe it's because the parent doesn't have enough money for the entry fee, or the uniform. Why doesn't the parent have enough money? Because they have a low-wage job? And why do they have a low-wage job? Because they have not received or obtained enough education to get a higher paying job. OPNH is now able to step in and help those parents go to an Occupational Resource Center for job training or to help them get their GED.

One parent who was positively effected by Orchard Park Neighborhood House was "Jackie". Jackie became pregnant as a teen-ager while attending Madison Park High School and subsequently dropped out of school. Soon after the birth of her child, she became involved in the ABCD program, and was referred to Orchard Park for additional help. The staff at Orchard Park counseled her about jobs and education. Gradually Jackie and the OPNH had very little contact with each other over a two year period.

About six months ago, a representative of State Street Bank in Boston, contacted the Assistant Director of Orchard Park Neighborhood House, Lorraine Turner, to inform her about a program being offered by the Bank.

The Bank was offering mothers on Welfare, or people who

needed their GED a chance to complete their education

and receive employment with the Bank. Ms. Turner began

contacting mothers whose children attended the center,

or participated in the sports programs, to see who would

be interested. Jackie was one of ten mothers interested

in enrolling in the program.

Jackie took just a few months to finish her

education at the *Weight House and receive her GED

because she only needed to complete four or five

classes. (*The Weight House is and education center,

located on Forest Hills Street, which the City of Boston

gave a grant of $40,000 in 1984 to help adults complete

their education and receive their GED) At the same time

she was attending a two month training course to be a

teller at State Street Bank. She is now off of Welfare,

she has her GED, she receives a decent salary, and she

is self-reliant. That is personal empowerment! Every

time Willie sees her now, see is happy and feels good

about herself; all within six months.

Then there is "Alan". Alan was a drug addict. He

came into Orchard Park Neighborhood House one day crying

and distraught about his life situation; he wanted help.

He first spoke with a social worker at Orchard Park, and

they got him the help he needed most. Alan was

enrolled in a Brockton drug abuse rehabilitation center

for two weeks.

Alan returned to Orchard Park to express his interest in going back to school. He went to the Weight House to attend school and got his GED. As a result, he now works in a department store in downtown Boston as an assistant manager. Alan first came to Orchard Park because a cousin of his had played football on a team at Orchard Park, knew about the help that OPNH provided the community. These are two examples of the personal empowerment that has occurred as a result of sport being used as a tool for community building, empowerment, and organizing activities.

Life, not dissimilar to sport, works best when played with a team; people depending on each other for survival and success. A key measure of success, from the viewpoint of OPNH, is whether or not that person that they provided services to can survive on their own in five to ten years down the line.

The Orchard Park community was further brought together by its 1986 flag-football team being in a citywide flag-football Championship game. Mr. James distributed flyers throughout the community announcing the upcoming championship game and that a community pep-rally would be held for the team. As a result, approximately 150 people attended the rally and they brought with them lots of excitement for the team, and

the playoffs and helped create a stronger sense of community unity. The fervor created by the coming-together for a common cause has been documented in the book, Sociology of Sport: Diverse Perspectives, in which it is stated that,

> "...sport teams may provide residents with the mechanisms which facilitate the process of symbolic characterization or conceptualization of the community and thus, foster sentiments of identification as they come to serve as foci for collective representations....sport teams were frequently the basis of civic loyalty and pride....Sport offers an opportunity for sentiments of friendship, loyalty, and common interest to be expressed through the utilization of symbols so that a common basis for identification and integration is established. For some residents of the modern city, sport teams and the facilities where they perform may become a source of pride and thus, serve as a major source of integration in the community."[22]

The integration of the community through the flag-football program has had positive impacts on parents and adult Orchard Park community members, but has also had positive effects on the youth in the community. Timmy Limbright is a Sophomore at English High who came through the flag-football program at Orchard Park. Timmy first started playing flag-football at Orchard Park when he was eight years old. Today he is one of the top players on his high school football team, averaging 400 rushing yards a season. But more

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[22] Ibid., pg.167.

importantly, Timmy has maintained a B- grade average while continuing to excel in football. His success is due to his mother's involvement in him and his sports participation, her support, and the stress for education that he was taught at Orchard Park.

Mark James (Willie James' son) is a Medco student at Wayland High who also participated in the flag-football program at Orchard Park when he was young. Mark is maintaining a B- to a C+ grade average while also a member of his school's football team. He has learned discipline, endurance, and the value of working hard to achieve your goals. Both of these students feel good about themselves, what the people at Orchard Park have taught them, and that they are student athletes.

Today, Orchard Park Neighborhood House is part of the Boston Youth Neighborhood League which has basketball and football games at Malcolm "X" park, (formerly Washington Park) and serves at least 120 kids per day, out of a total of 200 kids actually enrolled in the various day-care and after school programs available. Orchard Park now sponsors a summer camp for 175 kids.

Sport is now being used by Orchard Park to create Adult Softball leagues involving the parents of the young athletes during the summer. The diversity of programs at OPNH have all served to organize the Orchard

Park/Roxbury East community and include them in the planning and community empowerment process. Day care and head start programs give youngsters mental food via learning and nutrition for the physical development. Elderly programs get Seniors to participate in Bingo and Bowling as social outlets and integrating elements. The drug and housing development task forces give community residents something concrete to work on, involved in decision making, and feel better about themselves because they have had a say in the process. Summer camp programs give kids a chance to get out of the city and expose them to new environments.

CHAPTER III. " THE GAME PLAN IN ACTION "

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper was not intended to be exhaustive either in research or in ideas exploring the role, extent, or reasons for sport in American society and its particular importance to those groups of people who have been denied access into mainstream American socio-economic and political systems; I have focussed on one particularly Black community. It has been my intent to simply say, "Sport can be an organizing tool in the Black community that develops pride in people and brings people together to discuss issues, and very few people in this country have either looked at, or studied this possibility".

After I studied the Orchard Park case, it revealed an indicator of empowerment which is feeling good about self. I found three important elements on the path to success for Orchard Park's ability to organize the local community around sport, and that path leads to "Empowerment". Sport was used to accomplished these three things: (1) Personal Empowerment, (2) community empowerment and, (3) Community Organization and Unity. These elements should be considered in other communities for future community organizing and

empowerment strategies; an adaptive "re-use" of sport.

Personal empowerment has occurred in the Orchard Park community because youth have been provided with a constructive outlet that (1) helps youth feel good about themselves, positive about their ability to play football and still be a student athlete, and as to what they can be in the future. (2) Additionally, adult community members and parents of children who have participated on the football team have received help in obtaining fundamental educational development, and helped adults obtain additional job-training skills. (3) Still others have recovered from drug abuse, and have secured employment. These people feel like they have been able to take control of their lives and be self-sufficient.

Community empowerment is seen by looking at the "task forces" aimed at addressing problems and making changes in the community. Direct involvement, contact, and interaction among community members has occurred as a result of the input that people have into the programs helpful to the community. These task forces are comprised of people who previously had no, or limited, involvement in their local community. Now they have a sense of power based on positive perceptions of what they can accomplish as a group; that makes them feel even more important.

Community unity and organization has used sport as (1) a _vehicle_ to develop (2) community pride, especially when the team and individuals rally around youth, get involved in the community, and get organized.

However, some people may see sport as being a problems for organizing because they may think, "What if the team loses?" The point of sport as an organizing tool is that it provides a mechanism for integration and shared value responses regardless of the outcome presented on the scoreboard. Although there have been numerous techniques for organizing, sport is special because it is (1) pervasive in the Black community. (2) Sport also links parents with their kids and creates excitement about that connection because they are doing positive and concrete activities in the community.

I will show the lineal progression from sport, to community, to development, to empowerment in its five stages of development as they occurred at Orchard Park. Stage one involves the common experience of people with **sport** and sports teams results in a two to three week time frame to establish and organize teams. Stage two draws on the commonality of experience among people (particularly kids) through sport, thus becoming a major drawing factor for **community involvement** in both the sports teams, and other community activities. The third stage of organizing is the **empowerment** of the community

as to how it can address problems within the community; in the case of Orchard Park this stage took up to a couple of years to develop the full support of the community. The fourth stage is the involvement in sport by children, thus by their parents, and other community members, which creates positive **community spirit** and pride. This stage usually takes the length of at least one season, consisting of the spring, summer and into the fall, for the community's full support of the team. Once community pride has been established, stage five, **"task force creation"** can be implemented. "Task forces" are groups of community residents formed to focus on devoting energy to solving problems in the community.

The Orchard Park case study highlights the community team as a focal point where people feel more at ease with talking to each other. It is an example of the kind of learning and empowerment that occurs on playing fields, on game courts and in community centers. These skills, knowledge and learning, gained in informal "classrooms" can be transferred into all aspects of life; for knowledge is power.

I believe the community can establish a base of support via sport as an organizing tool, comprised of community residents that would support new strategies to improve images in the Black community, to provide opportunity for self-sufficiency, and to further

organize the community; ultimately, establishing community control over community schools, housing, and economic development.

Therefore, additional funding should be allocated to support sport and educational programs because so many positive things have happened. Programs and organizations based on models similar to the Orchard Park case study should head the list for additional funding sources allocated specifically for programs which help to facilitate sport and the community empowerment process. Through more sport/educational programs, more youth and adults can experience a growth in self dignity through education and community unity and organization that may not have otherwise been achieved. Sport is not a necessity for mobility out of the Black community, but is used by choice as an option for community organizing.

As a planner, I feel that more social policy research and formation should focus on methods to create more effective means of achieving community empowerment and community organization. I have tried to stress that it's not important to decide which sport you use as an organizing and community empowerment tool, but the uniqueness lies in the framing of the **concept** itself; its use and implementation.

Without a vision, the people die.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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A P P E N D I X

In the early days, Hecht House was principally an industrial school and a center for Americanization. It grew to become one of the largest settlement houses and community centers in Boston.

The Hecht House was an outgrowth of the old Hebrew Industrial School for Girls, founded in 1889 by Mrs. Jacob H. Hecht.

Upon her death in 1920, the center moved into its own building on Bowdoin Street in the West End and was incorporated under the name "Hecht Neighborhood House." With the shift of population, the Hecht House followed the Jewish people as they moved from the North End to the West End, and finally in 1936, it moved to 150 American Legion Highway in Roxbury, which was formerly occupied by the Home for Jewish Children.

In 1965, the Boston Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), which was located on Seaver Street in Roxbury, merged with the Hecht House, and consequently the center became known as the YMHA-Hecht House, a constituent agency of Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston.

Almost simultaneously, in 1968, a group of neighbors from Dorchester, who called themselves the Lena Park Associates, contacted the Dorchester APAC office, which was directed by Doris Graham, and asked for help in eliminating pressing housing needs that existed in the

Dorchester and Mattapan communities. However, with special assistance from Fowler St. Church, pastored by the Rev. Edwards, and St. Leo´s Parish, pastored by Father Shawn Sheehan, who was also the first president of the Lena Park Associates, Lena Park had to readjust its mission to meet the changing needs of the community. The new mission was to promote an improved quality of life for those individuals and families with recognized needs within the area, and to provide a comprehensive array of human services.

In 1970 it was decided that a full-time director was needed, so with help from United Community Services, a search committee was formed, and latter Patrick F. Jones, Jr. was appointed.

During that same period, Sydney Gale was Executive Director and Leonard Kaplan was president of the Jewish Community Centers, which worked closely with leaders of the local community. After extensive planning, undertaken by these two men in 1970, the Combined Jewish Philanthropies transferred the 150 American Legion Highway property for use as a multi-service center for the newer community residents--predominantly black. Thus, the Lena Park Community Development Corporation was able to establish permanent headquarters.

The new mission of the agency is to be recognized as the pre-eminent community development institution in

the city of Boston by providing an array of essential, innovative, life-enhancing services to its constituents. Thus, through the development and implementation of effective programs, impacts the political, social, economic and technological issues of our time.

Today the center is instrumental in providing services which include education, recreation, career development, employment, counselling, pre-school day care, after-school day care, youth and adult social group development, residential services to the mentally retarded, individual and family advocacy, social services, elderly services, nutrition education and community economic development.

In 1979, through a merger with the Roxbury Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Lena Park began providing social services, day care, recreation, and educational services to the residents of the Orchard Park Dudley East section of Roxbury.

Dr. Niathan Allen has since taken over as President of the Lena Park Community Development Corporation in 1983.

As the center´s logo, "Reaching Out and Touching," indicates, Lena Park has been instrumental in reaching out and touching many people and maintains a commitment to continue to service the communities of Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan and the city of Boston in general.