

On the Waterfront: Retrospectives on the Relationship Between Sport and Communities

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Arguments for funding new professional sport stadia with public money center upon the notion of community—fans' connection with the teams and the money that teams bring into the community. Through the lens of community theorists like Wirth (1938, 1964), Bellah and colleagues (1985), and Putnam (2000), this paper locates the professional sport franchise within local community relations and analyzes the ways in which local elites attempt to evoke community support (both emotional and financial) for their franchise. Following Ingham and McDonald (2003), we argue that professional sport is not an effective means for re-building any lasting sense of community. The results of town meetings held with citizens of Hamilton County, Ohio, reveal schisms along class, urban/suburban, and fan/non-fan lines, demonstrating that public subsidization of professional sport not only does not (re)generate a community-as-a-whole, but indeed may further divide residents depending upon their situated interests.

Les arguments en faveur de l'utilisation de fonds publics pour la construction de stades sportifs professionnels sont centrés sur la notion de communauté et plus particulièrement sur le lien entre les fans et «les équipes» et l'argent que les équipes «apportent à la communauté». En utilisant la loupe des théoriciens de la communauté (Bellah et al., 1985; Putnam, 2000; Wirth, 1938, 1964), cet article situe la franchise sportive professionnelle au sein des relations locales communautaires et offre une analyse des façons dont les élites locales tentent d'évoquer le soutien (émotionnel et financier) de la communauté pour leur franchise. Comme Ingham et McDonald (2003), nous soutenons que le sport professionnel n'est pas un moyen efficace de reconstruire un sens de la communauté durable. Les résultats des réunions tenues avec les citoyens du comté de Hamilton (Ohio) révèlent des schismes selon la classe, le milieu (urbain ou rural) et le statut (ou non) de fan, ce qui démontre que les subventions publiques au sport professionnel ne (re)gèrent pas la communauté en entier mais peut plutôt diviser davantage les résidents.

Introduction

Political leaders search for ways to generate support for policies intended to address the issues facing the American city today, such as the need for urban

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redevelopment and reinvestment (in the Northeast and Midwest) or avenues for growth (in the Sun Belt and Southwest). A frequent redevelopment/growth strategy has been the use of professional sport as an economic engine, achieved by building new stadia and arenas at the expense of local taxpayers. Promises are made of great economic gains from building these venues, though recent research shows these benefits to be nearly non-existent (Baade, 1996; Baade & Sanderson, 1997; Keating, 1999; Noll & Zimbalist, 1997). Hand-in-hand with these economic promises go calls to a sense of community within the citizenry. Rallying cries to support "our team" or to "get a team we can call our own" are made, appealing to the competitive nature of most Americans and to a nostalgic sense of community that supposedly once existed among us.

So the question becomes, "Given the costs involved in building a professional sport venue, does such construction contribute to a sense of community-as-a-whole or does it create schisms between and within the sub-communities occupying the same urban space?" Can professional sport foster a lasting sense of togetherness and integration where it has not been before, and bring it back where it has (supposedly) been lost? If so, then the expenditure of billions of public dollars may well be justified if, for no other reason, than to defuse the "recognition wars" in which subcommunities tend to absolutize their differences (see Bauman, 2001, p. 77; Bellah et al., 1985, p. 13). If not, if one also considers the limited economic benefits, new alternatives for urban redevelopment and economic redistribution should be pursued.

This paper presents a case study of these issues in Cincinnati. The city has just constructed a new home for the Reds Major League Baseball franchise and also recently completed the construction of the new stadium for the Bengals of the National Football League, both financed by a countywide sales tax increase. The paper reviews some theoretical perspectives on community to explain why appeals to one's sense of community are so strong and examines the intersection between this sense of community, the need for urban redevelopment, and professional sport franchises. Finally, results of a series of focus group discussions on these issues are presented.

Sociological Perspectives on Modernity and Community

Community, as we are using the word here, is a difficult concept to define, especially since its connotations change with time and context. In referring to "community" or an individual's sense of community, we signify a feeling of closeness and camaraderie with a group of other people, usually geographically proximate, who are not necessarily related through kinship. This paper examines whether or not professional sport provides a means for generating such a sense; often this question is posed in terms of a regeneration of such feelings. The idea that such widespread cooperation, relative intimacy, and friendly relations ever existed is open to critique, and thus, in many instances in this paper, the phrase "imagined community" (Benedict, 1983) is used instead. "Community" is a word that frequently elicits nostalgic yearnings for a way of life that, in fact, never really was. Still, the idea that in the past people were more friendly and helpful toward each other, usually bound together through kinship ties or shared cultural and regional histories, is a powerful one. As Bauman (2001) explains:

In short, “community” stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably available to us—but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess. Raymond Williams, the thoughtful analyst of our condition, observed caustically that the remarkable thing about community is that “it always has been”. We may add: or that it is always in the future. “Community” is nowadays another name for paradise lost—but one to which we dearly hope to return, and so we feverishly seek the roads that may bring us there. (p. 3)

There is then a sense that some sort of change has occurred in the ways in which we relate to each other on a routine basis and that this change has been for the worse. Following Bauman, the imagined “community” as we use it, is a paradise lost or paradise still hoped for precisely because it is imagined. Bellah and colleagues’ (1985) vignette of Joe Gorman illustrates the fallacy of the nostalgically imagined community and reveals how it is even tied up in sport: Quoting Joe,

I would like to see Suffolk get back to that type of atmosphere where fifteen people could get together, form a baseball team, go down to the park, don’t need uniforms or anything like that, play some ball and just have a good time. Nowadays to do that sort of thing, people demand uniforms and leagues and regulations and so forth. They don’t trust each other. But this other, older kind of spirit is what you need. (p. 11)

It is our imaginations of this kind, and not our realities, that currently are called upon when private entrepreneurs and “entrepreneurs in the public interest” (Hill, 1983) seek to divest us of our hard earned dollars to subsidize urban redevelopment projects including those which primarily benefit already wealthy individuals.

“Community,” as paradise lost, captured the imagination of some of the classical scholars in sociology. The theme is evident in Tonnies’ (1957) dualism of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*; in Weber’s pessimistic projection of a functionally rational orientation eclipsing tradition, affect, and value-rationality as the mode of social action in a modernizing world run by “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart” (1958, p. 182); and Cooley’s (1967) concern that the modern world was one in which specialized roles within a schematized mode of existence had replaced relationships of “being there for one another” as a group. We shall not discuss these ideas here (see Ingham, Howell, & Schilperoord, 1987; Ingham & McDonald, 2003) because we are more concerned with how “community” can still be imagined in the much changed set of social relations of late capitalism.

The changed set of social relations primarily refers to the structural enlargement of social contacts in functionally differentiated societies. What are the consequences for “community”—imagined or real—as the “chains of interdependency” are lengthened? Wirth (1938) observed how urban life differs from rural life in that urbanism entails social contact with great numbers of people in both small amounts of time and small amounts of space. In other words, people spend most of their day in a relatively small area (e.g., a neighborhood, a particular place of employment, or on a certain route to such sites) but encounter a very large number of people outside of these relatively closeted terrains. Wirth also notes that cities grow, they do not suddenly appear, thus the changes in social relations do not wholly replace the set of connections between people that had existed previously. Subtle reminders of the prior means of interdependence between people remain,

and feelings of a need for intimacy and connectedness persist. Indeed, as Wirth (1964, pp. 165-175) asserted, these subtle reminders remain because new bases of social integration must appear if people are to retain the capacity to act collectively in the face of divergent interests and increasing interdependence. For Wirth, the issue is not so much about the loss of community, but rather to identify the new criteria by which a community can be defined.

Like Wirth, Sennett (1974) saw the importance of the large number of social contacts that is concomitant with urban life, noting that such tremendous numbers of interactions have changed the way people relate to one another—more reserved, more protective of their own “personality.” Thus, the city-dweller may know many more times the number of other people than the rural dweller but may simultaneously be lacking the number of quality, intimate relations found in rural settings. The keyword for Sennett is *place*. Under the circumstances described above, place takes on increased value. The sense of place is based on the need to belong not to something in the abstract (space), but to somewhere in particular, and, in satisfying this need, people can experience commitment and loyalty—experience belonging to somewhere special and to keeping it safe (Sennett, 1999, p. 15). The downside here is that the “community” which is now sought often becomes a community of distinction—standing in isolation, separation, and hiding behind protective walls and guarded gates (Bauman, 2001, p. 114). This is an important point because these “real communities” stand in contrast to the imagined “community-of-the-whole” as purveyed by the ideologues of urban redevelopment.

The questions, to phrase them in Hobsbawm’s (1983) terms, are why and when do we invent or reinvent tradition, and what ideological purpose does the invention or reinvention process serve? As Hobsbawm (1983, pp. 8-9) observes: “Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented.” Therefore, if we are reinventing “community,” it suggests that there is need to symbolize social cohesion where it has been lost. Joe Gorman (Bellah et al., 1985) works toward reinventing his community of Suffolk, Massachusetts, precisely for the purpose of regaining some lost sense of commitment to each other. Such sentiments are at the center of ideological appeals to community used to generate support for publicly subsidizing professional sports.

As noted earlier, these appeals draw on the competitive nature of most Americans. This competitiveness, for Bellah and colleagues (1985), stems from the dominance of middle-class culture in the United States, which values above nearly all else “moving up the ladder of success” (p. 148), and the lost sense of communal bonds from the growth of modern individualism that at once values unfettered autonomy for all, yet comprehends that “only in relation to society [can] the individual fulfill himself” (p. 144). Furthermore, ideological attempts to unite a diverse constituency in a communal drive to “preserve a tradition” (in cities with a team that may be leaving) or “to become a major league city” (in a city without a major sports franchise) feed off the primacy of sports in the American consciousness and the belief that our communal fabric needs repairing. As Bellah and colleagues (1985) noted,

Communities . . . have a history—in an important sense they are constituted by their past. . . . The communities of memory that tie us to the past also turn us toward the future as communities of hope. They carry a context of meaning that can allow us to connect our aspirations for ourselves and those closest to us with the aspirations of a larger whole. (p. 153)

Thus, members of older cities, communities of memory that, among other things, have had major sports teams, have strong sentiments of trips to the ballpark or watching a game with a parent, memories that make people want to preserve these bases for relations with others—a social capital of networking linked to a symbolic capital of civic pride. People in newer cities, communities of hope that want to become bigger, more vibrant cities like those of our (nostalgically remembered) past, want to bring major league sports to their cities. These links between symbolic capital and the hoped for social and economic capital that may be derived from such are the strings that political and economic leaders pull in their attempts to garner support for public subsidies for sports teams.¹

Such commitment to the larger social network is growing scarcer, however, as evidenced by Putnam (1995, 2000). Putnam (1995) notes the decline in membership of numerous civic organizations, including labor unions, parent-teacher associations, civic and fraternal organizations, and, also adding a sport-related angle, bowling leagues. He extends sociology's classic concept of "secondary associations" in the growth of what he terms "tertiary associations" (p. 71), where frequently "the only act of membership consists of writing a check for dues or perhaps occasionally reading a newsletter" (p. 71). Such non-committal, rhetorical commitment is consistent with Bauman's (2001) ideas of the exterritorial elites, who seek to minimize the bonds of social commitment (as we discuss later in this paper), and with Bellah and colleagues' (1985) observation that people now seem to seek "the attainment of a private lifestyle lived, perhaps, in a lifestyle enclave" (p. 150). We belong to certain organizations and live in certain communities, as long as we do not have to attend organization meetings or participate in community events. But this focus leads to ambiguity about ourselves and our place in the larger world and "threaten[s] to deprive private life of meaning when there is no longer any purpose to involvement except individual satisfaction" (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 150).

To review, there is a two-sided debate concerning the concept of "community": the loss of relationships vis-à-vis the change of relationships. Some scholars hold the opinion that some more romantic sense of the way people relate to each other has been lost and that before such change the world was a better place to live. This is the sense of "imagined community" that is of interest to us, as to whether or not sport can regenerate it, since it is this nostalgic feeling, in addition to promises of economic gains, that political and economic elites utilize in their appeals for public support for stadia. However, the idea that the set of social relations has merely changed, rather than been lost, is a more effective view, and it is in this context that the rest of this work examines community bonds and the role that sport plays in them. Before delving into how these relations play themselves out in our case study, it is necessary to contextualize them within the political economy in which they occur.

Professional Sport, Political Economy, and Cincinnati

The plight of the American city since World War II is well known. White flight, de-industrialization, the degradation of the tax base, and the increasing demand for public services have all put great strains on municipal governments. Since a city's political leaders try to address the needs and wants of the citizenry

(particularly employment, which in turn provides housing, food, clothing, recreational desires, and so forth), these leaders are in a position where they must seek out strategies for economic growth and viability. The processes just mentioned have left urban populations that draw more from public services than they return in terms of revenue.

Thus, under the hegemony of the growth model the leaders of American cities are, according to Schimmel (2002, p. 343) in a position where they are essentially forced to facilitate the goals of Corporate America, since it is the best strategy for growth and revenue enhancement. To do so, these leaders engage in a number of activities in order to provide what Schimmel (1987) calls a "sociospatial urban environment that stimulates the formation of new businesses" (p. 21), to encourage firms to locate or relocate in their locale, and to expand their operations. These activities include tax abatements, low-interest loans, direct subsidies, revenue bonds, and allocations of land. It is assumed that growth in the corporate sector will subsequently "trickle down" to the average citizen in the form of jobs, increased income, reduced taxes, improved social services, and so on. Thus, the goals of private capital are equated (falsely) with the "public interest" and with the politics of redistribution, however ill fashioned. The contradiction that lies at the heart of stimulating the urban economy through the attraction of new business is evidenced by the fact that the new businesses are attracted through tax abatements and the old are seduced to remain through gifts from the public domain. So both the old and the new gain more from public subsidies than they deliver in tax revenues. Neither the urban poor nor the Corporate Rich directly contribute to urban redevelopment. The former are made to pay for it through the sales tax and the latter seek to evade the economic responsibilities that urban redevelopment requires. Both the redevelopment of actual infrastructures and of the amenity (cultural) infrastructures that benefit the corporate rich incur costs that fall on the shoulders of the consuming public, regardless of their purchasing power.

In the case of professional sport franchises, this has entailed providing venues for competition requiring hundreds of millions of dollars. Meeting an owner's demands means public subsidization of a new or greatly refurbished venue, either in part or in full. This can only be achieved with the cooperation of public officials, who, in entering into these agreements with capitalist franchise owners, can be described, as we noted earlier, as "entrepreneurs in the public interest" (Hill, 1983), creating "growth machines" (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Molotch, 1976) or "growth coalitions" (Mollenkopf, 1983; Swannstrom, 1985; all noted in Schimmel, 2002). Because, as Hill notes, capital is mobile and cities are not, the political leaders of a city must make efforts to get corporations to (re)invest in their city. This unites the economic and political leaders in a campaign of "boosterism": the managed attempt to unite efforts to spur economic growth (the goal of the capitalists) with the interests of the city as a whole, thereby promoting the interests of the dominant classes and legitimizing political solutions to the urban question of (re)development (Ingham et al., 1987). The subsidization of business (such as a professional sports franchise) is promoted as something "good for the community," where the benefits reaped by the franchise owner (paid for by the taxpayers) will "trickle down" to the urban region in the form of jobs, increased economic activity, and so forth.

These new stadia provide substantial fiscal benefits to the franchise owners (usually, the value of the franchise escalates), while providing little economic benefit to the community that pays these subsidies (see Baade, 1996; Baade and

Sanderson, 1997; Keating, 1999; Noll and Zimbalist, 1997). In this manner, public funds are financing millionaire owners and their businesses in the effort to boost their profits, while the economic opportunity costs to the community (such as neglecting to provide for the schools, to refurbish infrastructure like streets or public transportation, etc.) are enormous. The focus of this work is to analyze the effects of acquiring public subsidies on the sense of “community” that exists in Cincinnati, and it is to this purpose that we now return.

The Link Between Professional Sport and Community

Public officials are accountable to the constituencies that elect them. An important selling point for the “general public” to buy into the purported benefits of the relationship between public and private is the establishment and/or maintenance of a community identity. This identity includes, and even emphasizes, the (false) bond between a sport franchise and the city in which it plays its home contests. This bond is a false one (see Schimmel, 1987) because, while a team incorporates the city’s name in its moniker (e.g., the Cleveland Browns or the Cincinnati Reds), the ties that bind a team to a particular city are thin at best, even when the ties that bind a city to “its” team are strong. (For example, witness the situation of the original Browns leaving Cleveland and the Raiders leaving Oakland—both franchises had sell-out crowds for each home game since their inception.) But the bond is emphasized in an attempt to combine economic capital with the symbolic capital of civic pride in order to get the various constituencies of an urban space to invest in their “community-as-a-whole” while ignoring their own constituent needs.

Regardless of the strength of a city’s attachment to a team, in order for a constituency of citizens to be willing to have their tax dollars spent in such large amounts, they must believe that the building of a new stadium/arena for “their team” is “good for the community” or “in the public interest.” However, as noted earlier, “community,” as we believe it was in the past, is disappearing. The set of social relations that pervade our society is changing—indeed has changed—and the “sense of community” is not what it once was. Following Bauman (2001, chap. 6), the changed sense of community might derive from the decoupling of the cultural politics of difference from the social politics of equality. If so, the right to recognition (human rights) rather than the right to redistribution (social justice) forms the basis of the urban subcommunities and their social cohesion. Votes and elections concerning increased taxation thus do not really represent the collective will, because the urban “collective” is fractured around difference, and ballots are cast with both cultural difference and economic redistribution in mind. The sales tax, for instance, is the most regressive form of taxation. It hurts the poor most, and in most urban areas, the poor are predominantly black and Hispanic. Thus, if the vote favors the use of a sales tax increase to subsidize sport franchise owners, the politics of redistribution follow a reverse Robin Hood principle, and the politics of difference are exacerbated since the civic ritual that is sport economically excludes those who are poor (regardless of race). Rather than stimulating the imagination of the community-as-a-whole, the articulation between difference and deprivation is spotlighted.

Thus the entrepreneurs in the public interest have a dilemma: "How do we sell professional sport as a worthy recipient of hundreds of millions of tax dollars?" The answer lies in part with the work of Turner (1969), who introduced the concept of *communitas*, or the special experience during which individuals are able to rise above those structures that materially and normatively regulate their daily lives and which unites people across boundaries of structure, rank, and socioeconomic status. He (1969, p. 132) distinguished his concept of *communitas* into three forms: 1) the spontaneous and short-lived; 2) the ideological affirmation of spontaneous *communitas*; 3) the normative, subcultural attempt to maintain the relationships of spontaneous *communitas* on a more permanent basis. This concept has been the core feature (even if they are not aware of it) of public officials' attempts to "rebuild" the sense of community within their cities and counties, even their states, especially in the context of keeping/attracting/discussing a sports franchise.

Ingham et al. (1987) devised the term *civic ritual* to describe the sporting contest as the combining of resources of both the state and private capital in the hegemonic interest of conjoining their interests with those of the subordinate groups and sub-communities of their immediate political and economic area. Civic rituals (and specifically sporting events) are marketed as a "community event," where the whole of a given city can unite in support of pursuing a common goal, such as a victory, a championship, and the like. People attend these events, experience the *communitas*-induced bonding with others of their region, and get a sense of social participation and union, the common notion of "community." Subsequently, the capitalist team owner and the public official appeal to this sense of community, which is really temporary *communitas*, when it comes time to build a new stadium or refurbish an existing one. Such messages often are promoted in the media with images of fans at games, dressed in team merchandise, all sharing the proverbial "thrill of victory," or coupled with doomsday-like predictions of what will happen economically and socially if the team leaves the city.

But why is *communitas* so powerful, making the entrepreneurs in the public interest able to persuade their constituencies that spending hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money for a sports stadium is a good idea, while they struggle to pass school levies and other similar measures? Returning to the ideas of community (Bauman, 2001; Bellah et al., 1985; Putnam, 1995; Sennett, 1974; Wirth, 1938) discussed earlier in this paper provides insight. People are searching for a sense of belonging and civic participation because they are psychically isolated. The physical proximity and social distance of the modern city causes people to seek out ways to connect with each other, rediscovering the sense of "community" we nostalgically believe once existed. The "hegemonic status of growth" (Schimmel, 2002, p. 343) has convinced people of the economic benefits of growth, in this case through subsidizing professional sports teams. Political and economic leaders promise the public that a professional sport franchise can also provide for this sense of community, bringing together our communities around a central rallying point, "our team."

Can sport truly regenerate the lost sense of community that plagues the modern citizen? On the surface, it seems that all races, classes, and religions can be found in every crowd at every professional sport contest, cheering for a common goal, paining at the setbacks against "their" team, commiserating together after a loss,

celebrating together after a victory. But is this community? Ingham and McDonald (2003) make the argument that representational sport cannot manufacture "community," but only spontaneous (and short-lived) *communitas*. While notions of "community" serve as a vehicle for much ideological work by the political and economic elite, it does so in the form of *communitas*. "Community involves time and social commitment, and the investment of social capital. . . . [It also] involves trust and obligation. [Professional sport offers] no basis for such" (Ingham & McDonald, 2003, pp. 17-33.) Moreover, and as noted previously, we have to ask where people are putting their time and commitment (their social capital) when it comes to the confirmation of community. Putnam (1995, 2000) says it is in tertiary associations. Bellah and colleagues (1985) and Bauman (2001) say many are retreating into lifestyle enclaves, loosening any ties to a fixed community on the ground, standing behind the guardhouses of their physically (or at least socially) gated communities. It is hard to conceive of spontaneous *communitas* in cities where, in these and other ways, the politics of difference are becoming increasingly sectarian and where the politics of mal-distribution only serve to fuel the politics of difference. Recent events in Cincinnati (the acts of resistance following the shooting of a black man by a white police officer and the subsequent effective calls for various economic and cultural boycotts) have shown this to be true. Here the spontaneous *communitas* anchored in anger and difference stands in stark contrast to the spontaneous *communitas* that civic rituals such as sport are supposed to generate in heterogeneous urban populations.

We also should ask if those who are the primary beneficiaries of public subsidization really need the communities that they exploit. As we noted earlier, capital is mobile; cities are not. Where there is inter-urban competition for firms, the ties that bind are loosened. When it comes to community, as Bauman argues, there is a trend toward the secession of the successful. Being in and with a community entails a messy intimacy. Thus, the new elites are not defined by any locality; they are truly exterritorial (Bauman, 2001, p. 54) and globalized. The point here is not just that the politics of redistribution have been exacerbated by the increasing income gap between the rich and the rest, but that the community commitment gap has been intensified by the exterritorialism of the urban elites. "Community" thus must appear as rhetoric to those who watch on as capital locates and relocates and the elites are everywhere but here! When they are here, as Bellah and colleagues (1985) state, they withdraw into lifestyle enclaves. Bauman argues they are not truly here because their lifestyle celebrates the irrelevance of place—"a condition most conspicuously beyond the reach of ordinary folks, of the 'natives' tied fast to the ground" (2001, p. 57).

The elites are physically, psychologically, and culturally distanced from the everyday practices that mark membership in a community. In what way, then, can they play a role in the confirmation of the "community-of-the-whole"? Their "confirmations" occur only when they are in transitional need of community support to achieve their own ends. When the "community" fails to meet their demands, it is the "community" that has let them down, that has been disloyal. Surely, under such circumstances, it is quite legitimate to search for greener pastures elsewhere! Again, to quote Bauman (2001), "More than anything else, the 'bubble' in which the new cosmopolitan business and culture-industry global elite spend most of their lives is . . . a community free zone. . . . The 'secession of the successful' is, first and foremost, escape from community" (p. 57). As noted earlier, Corporate

America and Major League Sports cannot and will not confirm the “community-as-a-whole” because such confirmations require loyalty and intimacy—the shackles of commitment. We wonder whether the new elites can ever be part of spontaneous *communitas* except as voyeurs from their disengaged heights.

The Case of Cincinnati: Retrospectives

Is sport able to regenerate the imagined sense of community that is believed to have once existed? Can its symbolic capital really merge the social capitals of *place* into the “imagined” social capital of *space* through the ideological representation of *space* as *place*? This really is the crucial question. How do the people of a metropolitan area feel about the public subsidization of sports teams? How do the interests of the dominant in economic terms and as mediated through the conflation of economic and symbolic capital in the form of a sport franchise secure consent from those who do not have the economic capital to give?

Mitrano (1999) discussed the social psychological effects of team relocation away from a city when these subsidy demands are not met by the city/state that claims the franchise, specifically in Mitrano’s case the city of Hartford, Connecticut and the NHL Whalers. The flip side of this coin would be “How do people feel when the team stays only at the expenditure of hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars?” We can begin to answer this question by reviewing the particulars of the case study we performed in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Cincinnati, like most American cities since 1950, has faced many of the problems reviewed earlier in this paper. Its most recent disinvestment problem began in the 1980s, sparking a pro-growth campaign in which political leaders called for an all “bricks-and-mortar” central business district. This ultimately turned Cincinnati into what urban developers and architects from around the country in 1994 termed a “dull, corporate ghetto” lacking fun, romance, and spontaneity (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1994, p. B4). More family oriented entertainment was needed.

This was not from a lack of effort. Cincinnati had been trying to develop recreation along the riverfront since 1948’s Metropolitan Master Plan, which eventually led to the bond issue in 1962 providing money to build Riverfront Stadium (the late Cinergy Field), Riverfront Coliseum (now Firstar Center), the Serpentine Wall, parks, and apartment complexes along the shoreline. In 1988 a large park at Sawyer Point opened as well. All of these projects were constructed along the eastern portion of the water front, while “Riverfront West” remained largely unused, save for some warehouses and parking lots. By the early 1990s, the Cincinnati Vision Task Force began to look at Riverfront West thinking in terms of recreational facilities as well, including new facilities for the two professional sport franchises, MLB’s Reds, and the NFL’s Bengals. To accomplish these goals, a one percent increase in the sales tax of the residents of Hamilton County (in which Cincinnati resides) was proposed.

Why were sport teams included in the redevelopment plan? Riverfront Stadium (Cinergy Field) was not that old and had served both the Reds and the Bengals as well as any multipurpose facility could. The key words here are “as well as any multipurpose facility could.” In November 1993, Mike Brown, the owner and general manager of the Cincinnati Bengals, threatened to leave Cincinnati for another city unless a new football-only facility was built. The new economics of the NFL

were such that traditional sources of revenue were, in the owners' minds, insufficient to meet escalating player salaries. In short, free agency had created wide variations in team payrolls, and franchises with the most in-stadium (non-shared) revenues have the disposable income to afford the top players and to continue to earn profits (Rosentraub, 1997, p. 5). Mike Brown couched his need for a new football-only stadium in such arguments (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, November 11, 1993, p. A1). For example, NFL teams averaged 68,630 seats, \$12.8 million in ticket revenues (home and away, under NFL revenue-sharing), and \$4 million in revenues from luxury boxes and club seating (not subject to revenue-sharing). Riverfront Stadium held 58,500 (fifth smallest in the league), the Bengals made \$11.2 million in ticket revenues, and no revenues from premium seats in 1992 (Ozanian, 1993, p. 26). Luxury suites, club seats, and in-stadium restaurants, then, have become the main pathways for financial success for team owners (Noll & Zimbalist, 1997; Rosentraub, 1997). Thus, included in Brown's demands for a 70,000-seat stadium were 100 luxury suites and 7,000 club seats. From the standpoint of the "new economics," Riverfront Stadium was hopelessly obsolete with its 20 suites, and even the revenue from these seats was retained by the city—the landlord of the stadium. These same factors placed the Reds near the bottom of MLB revenues as well, and they were making the same relocation threats should not their own, single-purpose venue be built. These threats to relocate were not bluffs. For example, Baltimore beckoned the Bengals, having lost "its" Colts to Indianapolis several years earlier (see Schimmel, Ingham & Howell, 1993).

The importance of both teams' relocation threats was twofold. First, because both franchises almost simultaneously (the Reds owner Marge Schott's potential relocation announcement had been made 3 months earlier than Brown's) expressed the same sentiments. These criticisms of Riverfront Stadium and the corresponding loss in revenues ultimately led to the offer to build two new stadia. Brown and Schott were feeding off each other by lamenting that one was receiving something the other was not. It reached the point where the city and county could not do something for one team without doing something for the other. Second, the timing of the threats was propitious from the franchises' viewpoints because the city was struggling economically and to lose both of its image-identifiers (combined with the loss of money that was thought to be generated by them) would have undercut Cincinnati's claims to be a major league city and the boosterism campaigns that flowed from that.

We shall not continue to detail the events that followed the relocation threats.² Suffice it to say that, after months of bickering and political machinations, a proposal was put before voters to raise the county sales tax by .5 percent. This increase would not only pay to build two new stadia, but other civic improvements as well, primarily in and around Riverfront West. The voters approved this tax increase, and, as a result, Cincinnati would be able to retain its two professional franchises for some time to come.³

Cincinnati thus danced to the familiar tune played by professional sport franchises, as this same scenario has been played out in many cities across the country. Arguing that an obsolete stadium was costing them revenues and, hence, the ability to secure talented athletes, Mike Brown and Marge Schott proceeded to black-mail the city of Cincinnati into the building of two new stadia by threatening relocation. While there is a growing literature on the fraudulence of such claims of economic growth from building stadia, the other side of these arguments, that

professional sports (re)generates a sense of the community-as-a-whole and therefore deserves public subsidy, has not been studied to the same degree. Does professional sport (re)generate a sense of the community-as-a-whole?

A series of focus groups was held with residents of Cincinnati and its surrounding county of Hamilton, investigating from the “bottom up” their perspectives, attitudes, and opinions regarding the use of public funds to build stadia for the local professional football and baseball teams. We are taking this critical-theory approach as a means to counteract the fact that most of the support for the project seems to have come from the “top down” (i.e., from those with either political and/or economic power). Thus, an analysis of the perspectives of those whose side has not been voiced as loudly or prominently is warranted.⁴

We held a total of five focus group discussions, each facilitated through a different community organization (see Appendix), which were attended by a total of 34 participants, 10 of whom were male, and 24 female, ranging in age from 23 to 83. Individual focus groups ranged from five to ten participants each. Participants filled out a short demographic survey, identifying participants only by first name. Details of the information gathered on the survey are disclosed in the Appendix. After this, the session turned to a primary series of questions that was developed in advance to guide the discussions. Further questions were determined by the direction of the responses obtained in order to facilitate the depth of discussion. The primary series of questions is listed in Table 1. The facilitator of all focus group discussions was the lead author.

Results and Discussion

Before delving into the results, a comment must be made regarding the data collection process. It was exceedingly difficult to get participants in this study, as is often the case, in spite of the fact that community organizations were used as a means for entrée into the population. Organizational membership often signals a more active individual in terms of community involvement and interest (Putnam, 1995, 2000), and groups that are already organized would seem to provide a ready-made forum for discussing issues of interest to the community of which they are a part. Well over two-dozen groups were contacted via phone, fax, letter, and email, and many of the contact people were enthusiastic about, or at least willing to consider, participation. However, their memberships were less inclined to be a part of the study, and recruitment of participants became quite a challenge, even in the groups that ended up as part of the study. It may be that Putnam's (1995, p. 71) assertion that “membership consists of writing a check for dues or occasionally reading a newsletter” has merits.

The reason this point is made here is that this in itself is a worthy finding for discussion. Such a lack of interest in a well-known issue costing their community hundreds of millions and projected to cost billions of taxpayer dollars can signal a degree of estrangement (to use Weber's term) within the populace. It may be that they feel an inability to affect desired outcomes and a certain disenchantment with the political process as a whole. Indeed, when discussion is made below of the sense of voice within the Cincinnati area concerning county-level decision-making, this general disenchantment and estrangement becomes quite evident. Furthermore, in all the focus groups, only one of the participants was African-American and none were Latino. Efforts were specifically made to target areas with a

Table 1 Primary Focus Group Question Set*Perspectives on Community*

- What are your thoughts when I say “community”?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in the Cinti area?
- Do you have a sense of integration with the rest of Cinti? Why/why not?
- Do you have a voice in policy decisions or in the decision making process for your county?

Perspectives on Urban Redevelopment

- In your opinion, what areas of Greater Cinti need money for redevelopment?
- Why these areas? What kinds of things need to be done in these areas?
- (If Riverfront West is mentioned, go with it. If not, bring it up and ask why it wasn't mentioned. Now that it has been brought up, would people consider it a priority? Why/why not?)

Perspectives on Sport

- Are you satisfied with the quality/quantity of sport/recreation facilities in your area?
- Should taxes be used to maintain or improve these facilities?
- Let's talk about how you consume sport:
- Do you watch sports on TV? cable? pay-per-view?
- Do you currently attend Reds/Bengals games? Why/why not?
- Will you attend games in the new stadia? Why/why not?

Perspectives on Community-Sport Relationship

- Do you think the Reds/Bengals provide or contribute to people's sense of community in Cinti?
- Did you vote in the decision to use taxpayer \$ on building the stadia?
- If you voted for it, what ideas/arguments convinced you?
- If you voted against it, what ideas/arguments convinced you?
- How would you have preferred the money from the tax increase be spent?

significant proportion of minority residents, thus the dearth of minority participation, indeed, a near lack of it, may signal an even greater sense of estrangement within that segment of the population. As noted earlier, there has been a deterioration in the relations between the inner-city black communities and the city government (and its law-enforcement agencies). An incident that occurred after this study was conducted seemed like the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. As already noted, the shooting of a black man by a white police officer led to rioting and to calls for boycotts (by conventions and concerts mainly involving black artists)⁵ which continue as we write. Since May 2003, leaders of the boycott (e.g., The

Black United Front, Coalition for a Just Cincinnati, Concerned Citizens for Justice, Stonewall Cincinnati) have continued to refuse to sit down with the city council and stated they would not do so until the city leaders address a list of demands—the revamping of the police force (taking older police officers off the street because they consider them racially biased), removal of racial profiling, increased use of tax monies for subsidized housing and improved schooling (Taft High School lacks text books for students to take home, for example), to name a few. The shooting, then, was a catalyst of the simmering state of unrest in Cincinnati—unrest anchored in both the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution.

Perspectives on Community

When asked about the sense of community in their immediate locales, or within Cincinnati as a whole, people were able to discuss the concept of integration or linkages between people rather lucidly. The focus of most participants' sense of integration is more closely linked with their surrounding neighborhood (place) rather than the city as a whole (space). This is probably due to the fact that Cincinnati has formally organized itself into numerous neighborhoods, each with their own Community Council, which serves as a liaison to the City Council and City Hall. Don, a 40-year-old male from Price Hill, said,

all of the different neighborhoods that have been set up throughout Cincinnati [have their own] institutions and characteristics, [which] define each of those neighborhoods. I would say we have interlocking neighborhoods, but they are not integrated.

Others did feel, however, a sense of integration with the rest of the area, though not as strong as to their immediate area. Mary, a 50-year-old female from Price Hill, said that when outside of the Cincinnati area, people simply say that they are "Cincinnati-ans," but when within the area, they define themselves by the neighborhood that they call home. This illustrates Wirth's statement that elements of earlier forms of society—notably folk society of small, close-knit communities—still exist. People still have strong ties to those immediately around them, though such ties are not exclusive. They may be the strongest, but there are also ties to the larger area, part of a larger network that exists because they reside in a large, metropolitan area (the changed set of social relations mentioned earlier). Such ties also are manifested in comments regarding the diversity of activities that are available to someone in the Cincinnati area, or the concern shown for people who have to commute to the downtown area and do not have ample parking space once there.

Thus, a sense of a "Cincinnati community" does exist, but it is secondary to one's immediate locality. Within this idea of a Cincinnati-wide community, interestingly, some antipathy was expressed for more wealthy areas,⁶ such as when Jack, a 73-year-old male from Cheviot, said with a sneer,

I live in a mediocre community, wealth-wise, Cheviot, and Mike Brown [the owner of the NFL's Bengals] lives in Indian Hill [the wealthiest suburb of Cincinnati]. Why should I be helping this dude out by paying extra taxes?

Others, in expressing their opposition to the stadium issue, made similar remarks, such as Kay, a 62-year-old female from Price Hill, who noted that, "It's the rich

ones who want to be subsidized, and I am against that. Especially because they cry that the poor are subsidized."

In any city, daily life is affected by decisions made at levels beyond the local neighborhood or even city, and this was the reason for asking about people's sense of voice in county-level decision-making. In the case of Cincinnati, the stadium-funding issue was, as mentioned in the introduction, a countywide sales tax increase. Across the board, participants felt that county level policymakers are quite detached from their constituents, particularly those who reside in Cincinnati proper. Teresa, a 35-year-old female from Price Hill, said, "They really don't want to hear the little people." Joan, a 70-year-old female from Cheviot, remarked, "I just feel like they do what they feel like doing, and the heck with the rest of us." Bob, a 71-year-old male from Cheviot, agreed with Joan, saying, "I think ninety percent of the people in Hamilton County would tell you the same thing." Mary, from Price Hill, said:

They [Hamilton County officials] seem to forget that Cincinnati is part of the county. It's that way in the parks, road construction, it's in every facet. The county government pretty much ignores the city; the city does not receive the same services that are offered to our countywide counterparts.

The only positive comments made were from one focus group, when some participants commented that commissioners with ties to a particular side of town usually act in accordance with what was best for that side of town, but this clearly does not reflect a sense of "Cincinnati-as-a-whole."

Thus, appealing to the concept of the "community-as-a-whole" is somewhat paradoxical in this case. "Community-as-a-whole" refers to people throughout Hamilton County (and southeastern Indiana and northern Kentucky, as well, although, in the issue of interest here, these people were not asked to pay for the stadia) and asks them to support a common cause, but there is little evidence for the existence of a "Cincinnati-wide community." Indeed, the comments made by participants in this study reveal more disunion than union at the level of Cincinnati-as-a-whole (or Hamilton County)—most notably, suburbs versus city neighborhoods, lower classes versus upper classes, and sports fans versus non-fans. This last conflict came to the fore most explicitly in a comment by Kathy from Cheviot: "It was probably all of these jocks that never voted in their lives that voted for the stadium because they threatened to take their football away."

Perspectives on Urban Redevelopment

At this point, the discussions turned to perspectives on urban redevelopment, which was described as the infusion of money and resources into areas of a city that have fallen into disrepair. Such funds and resources can be used for new construction, refurbishment of existing structures, or improvements in infrastructure. Participants felt, across the board, that the neighborhoods of Cincinnati proper needed more attention than the downtown area. While all of the surrounding neighborhoods could use attention, some needed it more than others. Don, from Price Hill, said it most succinctly: "[A]s you get closer to the center of the city, those neighborhoods need more. That's because they're older, and under more stress because of demographic changes." Every group identified needs within their own

neighborhoods or communities, but also made the point that areas throughout the Cincinnati area need improvement.

When asked to expand further on their suggestions for alternative redevelopment projects, the most frequently mentioned issue was the schools. Karen, a 23-year-old female from Cheviot, remarked, "I went to public schools here in Cincinnati, and I went to one of the best, but still our building was falling down around us. [In 1996, when the stadium issue was on the ballot] that was something that I had just experienced, and I knew that was just more important." Kathy, a 51-year-old female from Cheviot, agreed, noting that, "We have the oldest schools in the nation, and I think our priorities are screwed up." This is an interesting point, because, as the reader may be aware, school levies (to increase local property taxes) usually fail, yet improvement of the schools is regarded as a high priority. A preference for spending county (and, in an unrelated issue, state) funds for schools suggests that people seem to feel that education (at least funding it) should be handled at a governmental level above the local (i.e., the county, state, or even federal) level would be more acceptable for the distribution of school funding. More importantly for our purposes here, support was nearly unanimous in the various focus groups that this was a more important target for urban redevelopment than any other project, including stadium construction.

The next most-mentioned topic for redevelopment was the construction of some sort of public transit system, particularly a light rail system that would connect the outlying areas to downtown. All of the comments regarding a light rail system were positive, other than those that noted the frequent recurrence of this issue in governmental discussions and the subsequent lack of action. Participants showed keen insight into the workings of a city when discussing this matter, as shown by Karen from Cheviot when she noted that more people would likely go downtown (or even live there) and patronize establishments (like museums or businesses in that area) if a convenient and easy-to-use mode of transportation existed for them to get to such places. In addition, it would lighten the traffic and parking problems that plague Cincinnati (and every other major city), further encouraging people to venture downtown.

The lack of parking and poor road conditions were also cited frequently regarding needed projects within the city. These conditions were also prevalent in the outlying neighborhoods, and there was much opinion that it is here (in the neighborhoods rather than downtown) that these needs should be addressed. These issues, along with a need for more affordable housing, were the other topics that came up consistently as urban redevelopment projects that were needed in the city, and would be preferred over the large amounts of taxpayer funds that are currently going toward construction of the new stadiums. (One group disagreed with increasing the amount of affordable housing, preferring instead to refurbish existing affordable housing.)

Riverfront West was rarely mentioned as needing redevelopment efforts. This may be a residual effect of the current stadium and road construction that is taking place there (i.e., people have it in their minds that such activities are already taking place, thus there is no need to suggest further development). However, when the investigator brought it up, there were several suggestions for things to be done there either in addition to, or, more typically, instead of stadium development. Suggestions were made that this area could have been used for housing development,

turning the abandoned warehouses in the area into affordable condominiums and apartments (Teresa, of Price Hill, and both Bob and Jack of Cheviot, for example, suggested this). Others offered the prospect of campground and/or recreational areas as being a better use of the space (Gloria and Jim of Price Hill). Parking areas were a third suggestion (Fran of Price Hill, and Lee of Anderson). The theme that ran through all of these offerings was that of allowing more widespread and general use of the area by residents of the region. The current projects were seen as tying up attractive spaces for stadiums and practice facilities that are only used on selected days of the year by a very small segment of the population. As Jim, a 55-year-old male from Price Hill, said, "[The Cincinnati Development Council] need[s] to create some things that everybody can afford to do."

Perspectives on Community-Sport Relationship

On the stadium funding issue, the vast majority of participants in this study voted against it. Of those who voted for it, half of them said that they would now vote against it. Those who supported the issue were convinced by the promises of city improvement, in particular the influx of money that was supposed to come to the downtown area, the jobs that would be created, and the development that would result along the riverfront. Those who opposed the issue saw building two stadia as unnecessary (or felt the existing stadium should be refurbished), were against increased taxes, were turned off by the expensive nature of attendance, or held the belief that only those who attend games or owned the teams should pay for the new stadiums. Other reasons for opposing the public funding for the stadiums included the poor performance of the teams, offense taken at the team owners' threats to move their franchises, the lack of guarantees that union labor would be used, a general opposition to corporate welfare, and a belief that there would be minimal return for such a large investment.

Those who changed their minds (i.e., voted for it but now oppose it) were upset with the cost overruns that have occurred and what was perceived as general administration problems in the project. When asked how they would have preferred such large amounts of tax money to be spent, answers reiterated those given when discussing urban redevelopment (schools, public transportation, parking, and housing.)

The opposition expressed to the stadium funding could have been a result of a general lack of interest in—or even aversion to—sports, but this was not the case. All of the groups were composed mostly of people interested in professional sports, who enjoyed following the teams and the games through some media outlet or attendance, and approved of using public money to finance local sports and recreation facilities. The opposition was centered in beliefs unrelated to their interest in sport—different priorities for using redevelopment money, a philosophical opposition to corporate welfare, an inability to afford attendance at the stadiums, and so forth. This demonstrates a more critical understanding of sport in the urban context than is assumed by those who purvey it as a remedy for the "urban problem" of a lack of imagined community. If sport were really the antidote to a perceived loss of affiliation among residents of a given area, then they would support activities that enable sport to function in their community and continue to "bring them together." Clearly, at least in this instance, people are not "community dupes" who will believe that sport will fix what ails them.

When asked if the Reds and/or Bengals contribute to the local sense of community, most people responded in the affirmative, many times pointing out that this was true more for the Reds. This is probably a function of two things: 1) the longer history (125 years versus 30) that the Reds have in the city and 2) the more recent and (generally greater) success of the Reds (three world championships, including one in 1990, as well as a near berth in the playoffs just the year before, versus the NFL team with no world championships and the most losses in the NFL during the 1990s). However, as participants continued to describe their opinion of the team's contributions to the local sense of community, their responses revealed less of a camaraderie-inducing bond among the populace than a sense of identity and common fandom. Lee, from Anderson, said that there is "a sense of pride in your Cincinnati team." Tina added a thought that others throughout the study did as well; namely, "when the Reds are winning people do get into it." Don, of Price Hill, perhaps put it best: "Cincinnati, being a relatively small town (on a major league scale), people do identify more with our sports franchises. They contribute a sense of pride and identity, especially the Reds." The team(s)' symbolic capital for some is linked to winning; for others it seems to be more permanent. But the ideological attempt to fuse symbolic capital with social capital did not beguile the respondents. One reason for this lay in the obvious reverse Robin Hood transfer of economic capital from the "have-nots" to the "haves" mentioned earlier. Another reason is that the respondents drew discriminations between being a fan and being a member of a community in a local sense of place.

While providing a common point for fandom, a sense of identity, and adding to the pride of a city (when they are winning) are valuable contributions, these are not synonymous with the sense of imagined community we are interested in here. They do not induce greater affiliation between people on a permanent basis, but rather fall into the category of spontaneous and temporary *communitas*, as Turner defined it. People get excited during a game, cheer wildly for a championship the evening it is won, even into the next morning. But the togetherness and bonding sport induces is short-lived. It does not recreate the *Gemeinschaft* of Tonnies; it does not somehow change people's mode of action (as Weber saw it) from instrumentally rational to affect-laden or even value-rational; it does not revitalize the attachment to one's primary group, the status of "being-for-one-another" as Cooley may have hoped; and it certainly does not overcome the xenophobia which Wirth wrote is reforming our communities into highly segmentalized and homogeneous groupings (Ingham et al., 1987).

Moreover, there was much antipathy specifically directed at Mike Brown, the Bengals owner, particularly due to his threats to move the team if a new stadium was not built with public finances and because of the general lack of success the team has experienced, especially recently. An interesting point was made by Kathy from Cheviot who said, "Don't you think the Bengals, with as bad as they have been, have caused people to band together because they all can't stand them?" This is the closest any comment came to establishing a sense of Cincinnati-as-a-whole. Two points must be made regarding her thoughts. First, a shared dislike of a person or group held by another group does not imply a sense of togetherness—community, as we are trying to view it—within the disliking group. It is interesting, however, that this idea was the one expressed that came closest to demonstrating some shared sense of union throughout the Hamilton County area. Secondly, it must be noted that this is certainly not what political and economic leaders have in

mind for (re)establishing a sense of imagined community when making their appeals for subsidizing stadia. Such endeavors are intended to unite the citizenry in support of the local franchise, formulating bonds between the residents themselves and between the franchise and the residents (the potential attendees at games, purchasers of merchandise, etc.) Instead, partly as a result of these stadium-funding issues, there seems to be a growing awareness of the falseness of the bond a team or franchise has with its host community. Thus, economic, symbolic, and social capitals do not necessarily articulate as entrepreneurs in the public interest might hope.

Conclusions

In this work, we have attempted to situate the professional sport franchise within community theory, as well as within the political economy of the city. Our conceptual framework and empirical analysis support several conclusions regarding the question, "Can sports regenerate community?"

First off, and more generally speaking, it is observable in the mass media that there is an increasing awareness of status among the general population, especially in the large urban areas. More people seem to have a sense that the power of decision-making is held by a relatively small elite and that "things get done" when that group of people wants them done, regardless of the opinion of the subordinated groups that also may/will be affected. Such awareness was present among many of the participants in this study, as shown in the results section regarding sense of voice in county-level decision-making.

Furthermore, a restructuring of the audience of professional sports has been taking place over the past 10 to 15 years—the time frame since "stadia mania" (to use ESPN's term) began in earnest. The crowd at many professional sport contests has become much more consumerist (as against fandom), with the proliferation of luxury boxes and "club seats" both a reflection and a furthering cause of this phenomenon. Corporations buy large blocks of season tickets to use with clients or to distribute to employees. Ticket and concession prices have reached the point that many "average citizens" cannot afford to attend the games with any regularity. These trends have resulted in this audience restructuring. Mention of the expensive nature of attendance was made in every focus group, as was a distaste for the actions of millionaire owners demanding hundreds of millions of dollars from taxpayers, threatening to move the team if their demands are not met.

More specific to our purposes here (i.e., the community-sport interaction), Cincinnati is one of the oldest "major league cities," having hosted a professional baseball team for over 125 years (the longest tenure of any professional team in any city) and a professional football team for over 30 years. Therefore, if the "sport can (re)generate community" contention was viable, one would expect Cincinnati to be a tightly knit community across the board and throughout the area, the long-term presence of these teams having worked their magic and fostered connections between people that would make Cincinnati a more integrated, close-linked city than perhaps any other. This is not the case. Much more important to people's sense of community in Cincinnati are their local neighborhood ties. People identified with and felt a connection and "kinship" toward their immediate surrounding area, such as the city neighborhoods of Clifton and Price Hill or the nearby suburbs of Cheviot and Anderson, much more strongly than toward "Cincinnati-as-a-whole."

Secondly, rather than bringing people together and improving the social bonds between them, the stadium issue seems in many cases to be splitting them apart along traditional and not-so-traditional lines. The classic divide between the upper and lower classes was evident in the responses participants offered, as was the familiar “city versus suburb” antagonism. The stadium issue seemed to deepen—or at least reinforce—these schisms, as well as introducing a new one: fans versus non-fans (witness Kathy’s comments quoted above, regarding who voted for the stadium tax.) A sense of estrangement also may be inferred from the results of this study, due to the difficulty encountered in recruiting participants from established community groups and organizations to discuss the topic. Greater divides between people and an exacerbated sense of disenfranchisement with decision-makers (hopefully) cannot be the “community bonds” that the “entrepreneurs in the public interest” were seeking when they appealed to Hamilton County residents for this tax money.

As a result, there is no reason to believe that building stadia for professional sports teams will enhance the level of communality and affiliation in Cincinnati. Indeed, it seems the opposite is true, that divides are—and continue to be—deepened by this blatant attempt to take (more) from the poor and give it to the rich. There seems to be no support (theoretical or empirical) that professional sport can (re)generate community, especially when there are other pressing issues that divide the city across racial, class, and community lines.

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Notes

¹The concepts of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital derive from Bourdieu (1984).

²For a detailed report concerning the deliberations that led to the building of the two stadia and the decision to use a sales tax hike to pay for them, see James Brown, unpublished master’s thesis, Miami University, 2003. We are grateful for his permission to use a small portion of his data in this section of the paper.

³See R. Fort (1997) for an enlightening discussion of the political machinations that often occur during the process of bringing such issues to a public vote, and the potential problems of the democratic process in capturing “public opinion” on such matters.

⁴See Smith (1999, 2000) regarding the focus group methodology and why it was selected for this study.

⁵The cancellations by Bill Cosby, Whoopi Goldberg, Wynton Marsalis, Smokey Robinson plus the cancellation of the Jazz Festival have been the most effective concerning the national perception of Cincinnati. However, except for these high profile cases, it has been concert business as usual in Cincinnati (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sunday, April 28, 2002).

⁶To reiterate, this study was intended to inquire “from the bottom up” in terms of socioeconomic status of residents of Hamilton County. Thus, participant neighborhoods and cities were lower in SES than some other areas of the city, particularly those referred to at this point.

Appendix

Demographic Description of Participants*

Name	Age	Gender	Race	Income	Education
<i>Anderson Senior Center</i>					
Virginia	72	female	white	50+	some college
Ginny	69	female	white	40	grad school
Lee	74	female	white	some college	
Bessie	65	female	white	<10	high school
Peggy	65+	female	white	high school	
Tony	83	male	white	<10	grad school
Tena	76	female	white	<10	some h.s.
Ernie	80	male	white	20	some h.s.
Marge	75	female			
Betty	65+	female	white	<10	grad degree

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Name	Age	Gender	Race	Income	Education
<i>Cheviot Community Meeting</i>					
Mike	41	male	white	30	some college
Karen	23	female	white	10	college grad
Kathy	51	female	white	10	some college
Mike	68	male	white	high school	
Jack	73	male	white	50+	high school
Bob	71	male	white	20	some college
Joan	70	female	white	grad school	
<i>Clifton Senior Center</i>					
Caroline	65+	female	white	<10	high school
Christine	65	female	white	10	high school
Anne	82	female	white	10	some h.s.
Marge	84	female	white	some college	
Clara	72	female	white	10	
<i>Price Hill Community Center</i>					
Jim	55	male	white	50	grad degree
Barb	53	female	white	20	high school
Gloria	59	female	white	40	some college
Theresa	35	female	af-am	<10	some h.s.
Mary	81	female	white	grad school	
Fran	72	female	white	<10	high school
Emma	75	female	white	<10	high school
<i>Price Hill Community Council</i>					
Herb	36	male	white	30	some college
Rick	41	male	white	50+	college grad
Kay	62	female	white	50+	grad degree
Don	40	male	white	50+	college grad
Mary	50	female	Nat. Am	50+	some college

*All information was self-reported by participants. Blanks indicate items not completed by the participant. Participants could choose from these income categories: <10 = less than \$10,000; 10 = \$10,000–\$19,999; 20 = \$20,000–\$29,999; 30 = \$30,000–\$39,999; 40 = \$40,000–\$49,999; 50+ = \$50,000 or more. For education, participants could choose: some h.s.= attended high school, but no diploma; high school = graduated high school; some college = attended college, but no degree; college grad = college graduate; grad school = attended graduate school, but no degree; grad degree = graduate degree holder. Ages listed are exactly as reported by participants.