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# 3 Up, 3 Down: the Complex Relationship of Professional Sports and Community Identity in Brooklyn, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C.

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3 UP, 3 DOWN: THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS  
AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY IN BROOKLYN, MILWAUKEE, AND  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

by

Peter Lund

A Thesis Submitted in  
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May 2014

ABSTRACT  
3 UP, 3 DOWN: THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS  
AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY IN BROOKLYN, MILWAUKEE, AND  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

by

Peter Lund

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014  
Under the supervision of Professor Neal Pease

This paper seeks to understand the role that professional sports teams play in influencing community identity. Specifically, it hypothesizes that community identity is one of the main factors in cities choosing to provide public funds as subsidies for the construction of sports stadiums and arenas. This influence is important, as economists generally accept that stadiums do not provide the economic contributions that popular rhetoric presents as justification for their construction. By looking at three cases where considerations of a publicly funded stadium resulted in a city losing its professional team, the larger discourse of public subsidies is augmented in complexity. While each case retains distinctive features, all three cities share a common thread of contributing in some way to the reinforcement of the stadium subsidization process.

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## Introduction

It would be difficult – if not impossible – to tell a history of sport in any society without also telling a history of economics. Sport especially has a history of elitism and exclusionary constructs that are almost always based around a social hierarchy influenced by economics, regardless of whether the dominant social form is patriarchal lineage or pure purchasing power. In the ancient world, athletes occupied a social realm all their own, existing as an “other” class that allowed an autonomous definition of standards and conceptions of things like beauty. As Jason König explains, in order to make a living as an athlete it was necessary to have the proper wealth, or at least the connection to it, to pay for your rigorous daily training, an idea especially prevalent in the Greek East (Asia Minor).<sup>1</sup> This training took the place of a producing role in society, and thus the lack of income required a connection to some sort of independent wealth. This requirement restricted participation in the highest forms of athletic competition (i.e. the Olympics) to those in the upper echelon of economic privilege, although there were also spectacles of “competition” put on by gladiators who were almost exclusively slaves. There were outlets for physical exertion; the famous Roman baths often provided a training ground for what could be carefully labeled ancient amateur athletics. But the far more common participation of the plebeians was the fanatical zeal for the circus games, what the satirist Juvenal dubbed “*panem et circenses*” (bread and circuses).<sup>2</sup> Yet it was the Olympians who generated an immense sense of local pride with their accomplishments at the games. Cities of the ancient world competed in a measurement of stature that can be at least partly understood as a precursor to boosterism. Thus the economic stature of a city’s

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<sup>1</sup> Jason König, *Athletics and Literature in the Roman Empire*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Juvenal, *Satire* 10.77-81

constituency may have had a significant impact on their ability to “rank” highly in the order of cities under a given hegemon or empire.

In modern professional sporting culture, the process appears to be reversed. The players engage in the sport as a profession hoping for glory, or at least a solid payday to render them financially set for the remainder of their life. This is especially true in professional baseball, which operates without a salary cap and allows for contracts of above average length and astronomical dollar values. As for modern fans, the free bread has been removed – and replaced with \$6 hot dogs or, if you’re in Minnesota, \$10 walleye-on-a-stick – but the zeal for the circus remains.

There are two exceptionally important and far-reaching economic developments that have influenced the relationship between economy and place in professional baseball. The first was the introduction of the reserve clause by Chicago White Stockings owner and general curmudgeon William Hulbert in 1879 and its eventual dissolution in 1975.<sup>3</sup> The second, with which this paper is mainly concerned, is the construction of publicly subsidized (and in some cases entirely publicly funded) ballparks.

The massive increase in popularity of baseball at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century led owners to realize that their small, mostly wooden parks were not up to the safety and

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Melville, *Early Baseball and the Rise of the National League* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001.), 115, explains Hulbert’s rather tyrannical tactics as league president. Benjamin Rader, *Baseball: A History of America’s Game*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 210-211, explains of how pitchers Dave McNally and Andy Messersmith successfully challenged the reserve clause through arbitration in 1975.

durability demands of the growing game.<sup>4</sup> The invention of steel-reinforced concrete sufficiently addressed owners' concerns about cost, strength, and durability, and led to a flurry of park constructions between 1900 and 1923.<sup>5</sup> Each of these parks, though, was privately funded. It would not be until Milwaukee broke ground for County Stadium in 1950 that pro baseball was introduced to the idea of a public subsidy for their ballparks. In the sixty-five years since Milwaukee broke ground for County Stadium, every Major League Baseball team except for the Red Sox and Cubs has opened at least one new park (and Fenway has undergone some renovations and Wrigley is scheduled to). Some parks, like Dodgers Stadium in Chavez Ravine and Oriole Park at Camden Yards, were harbingers of change in the micro-eras of the sport.<sup>6</sup> Others, like Coors Field in Denver and Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum have affected not just team roster construction but also the whole theory of player evaluation.<sup>7</sup> In Tampa Bay, they followed Milwaukee's success and built Tropicana Field in an attempt to entice the White Sox to move there in 1989 – a decision that has had serious ramifications for both the city and the franchise.<sup>8</sup> Yet the most common result of these new parks is the displeasure of

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce Kuklick, *To Every Thing A Season: Shibe Park and Urban Philadelphia* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 18. Rader, *Baseball*, 94, details the “twofold increase in attendance during the first decade of the twentieth century.”

<sup>5</sup> Rader, *Baseball*, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Neil J. Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 197.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Lewis's *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game* (New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003) does a great job of explaining the methods by which Oakland A's general manager Billy Beane has revolutionized the thinking about the utility of certain baseball statistics and the need for the creation of others. What the book does not do, however, is link any of the impetus for this change to considerable park effects that Oakland County Coliseum has on accumulation of certain statistics like home runs or, unique to the Coliseum's case, popouts.

<sup>8</sup> For the eleventh hour tactics that kept the White Sox in Chicago, see Charles Euchner, *Playing the Field: Why Sports Teams Move and Cities Fight to Keep Them* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1993), 3-4. For a more thorough exploration of the poor ownership decisions that eventually locked the Tampa Bay (née Devil) Rays into a lease at Tropicana field

communities that feel they have been co-opted into financing a ballpark or arena that they did not want. The bitter debate over construction of Milwaukee's Miller Park famously cost state senator George Petak his job.<sup>9</sup> In Miami, Marlins fans who were promised a new, community-centered Latin approach to team operations as a nod to the city's significant Cuban population were rewarded with an underperforming team that turned around and traded many of its key acquisitions away after one season. People in these locales expressed their displeasure with the possibility of funding a stadium for a multi-million dollar business that offered no explicit guarantee of return of any kind. In essence, the people were being asked to pay more (through taxes) in order to pay again to attend a home game or two. This process, which began in baseball, has since expanded to all of the North American professional sports. Andrew Zimbalist has summed up this uncomfortable situation, describing the cities as being "held hostage":

Demand for major league teams exceeds supply. Supply is restricted by a self-regulating monopoly. The inevitable result is that some worthy cities do not get teams and that the fortunate cities with teams are held hostage to threats of moving. This leads to the construction of new public stadiums filled with luxury boxes...city guarantees on ticket sales, and heavily subsidized rent.<sup>10</sup>

For Zimbalist, who is an economist, the root cause of all the problems faced by Major League Baseball (MLB) is their status as a self-regulating monopoly, which they have held since the Supreme Court ruling in 1922 of *Federal Baseball Club v. National*

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until 2020, see Jonah Keri, *The Extra 2%: How Wall Street Strategies Took a Major League Baseball Team from Worst to First* (New York: ESN Books, 2011), 31-47.

<sup>9</sup> Robin Toner, "Political Briefing: The States and the Issues; Wisconsin: Recall Alters Balance of Power," *New York Times*, June 9, 1996. See also Craig Gilbert, "Voters to decide Tuesday: Stadium, spending hit in recall debate," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 30, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions: A Probing Look Inside the Big Business of Our National Pastime* (New York: Basic Books, 1993.), xvi.

*League*.<sup>11</sup> It is through this special status that MLB is able to keep the number of clubs at a level that maintains demand in excess of supply. But what of Zimbalist's assertion that there are "worthy" cities without teams, and that the cities that do have teams are "fortunate?" What makes a city necessarily "worthy?" And if the inevitable result is such that every city with a team will eventually be held hostage for a new stadium, can they really be considered "fortunate?" One of the larger themes that this paper aims to address is this privileged commodity status that sports team have in the economy. The root of this privilege, Tom Melville argues, dates back to the 1880s with the establishment of the first semi-stable closed circuit of professional baseball, the National League. The closed circuit form provided the National League with a simultaneous legitimacy and exclusivity; a "best of the best" status. Other clubs could form and play, but only National League clubs could be recognized nationally. Melville argues that from the beginning baseball placed an emphasis on "achievement," meaning that they had a "national focus...[whose championship structure] developed early, [making] championship...the centerpiece of competition."<sup>12</sup> While this particular organization style "encourages autonomous professionalism," Melville argues that "no longer could this achievement focus ever be accessed 'from below,' from a rising level of locally-based achievement."<sup>13</sup> In other words, a city could not simply declare itself part of the National League's championship-competitive structure; rather it would need to be invited. When the American League, which had first organized in 1901, joined with the National League to begin playing the World Series in 1903, the closed circuit total was

<sup>11</sup> Harold Seymour, *Baseball: Volume 2. The Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.), 420.

<sup>12</sup> Melville, *Early Baseball*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

sixteen teams playing in ten cities. Those numbers wouldn't change until the Braves relocated to Milwaukee in 1953, beginning the continent-wide expansion of professional baseball that would see the game expand to thirty teams at the beginning of the 1998 season.

Expansion, of course, has increased the number of “fortunate” MLB cities who may be held hostage from ten to twenty-seven (New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago are the only cities that currently house multiple teams). In order to deal with this persistent problem, Zimbalist suggests a number of alterations to the structure of the major leagues that would effect change, some of which would be internal remedies from within the game's organizational structure, and some from regulatory bodies like Congress.<sup>14</sup> On the surface, Zimbalist's suggestions like antitrust legislation and revenue sharing make general sense because similar tactics were used in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to break up major monopolies like oil and steel in an attempt to reduce the inequality gaps in those industries and society at large. But *Baseball and Billions* was published just before the infamous 1994 players' strike, which forced MLB to recalibrate its approach to business in an effort to heal the massive public relations damage that the strike caused. In the wake of the strike, fans were able to voice their displeasure with their wallets by simply not attending games. This course of action was available to them as consumers because, unlike steel and oil, baseball was not a commodity of necessity, but rather an outlet for consumers' leisure-time spending. Baseball – and professional sports in general – operate in the realm of conspicuous consumption, where, based on the nature of the good being consumed, not all market forces act and react as would be expected in a capitalist economy. Zimbalist has since updated his problematization of the business of

<sup>14</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 177-186.

MLB to reflect the new, post-strike organizational structure in a 2003 book *May the Best Team Win: Baseball Economics and Public Policy*. The labor peace of the last two decades has removed the need for remedies aimed at labor stabilization, but the development of new, more intricate revenue structures like regional sports networks (RSNs) has added a new wrinkle of complication to what Zimbalist calls “the abuses and inefficiencies in the baseball industry.”<sup>15</sup> While some of these particular issues will be touched upon later in the body of this paper, the main issue that I intend to explore is the one which most directly affects the communities that house professional teams: the issue of publicly subsidized stadiums.

When reading both *Baseball and Billions* and the newer *May the Best Team Win*, the logic of economic remedies taken from microeconomic theory as the best aids for teams whose revenue streams cannot equal those of the Yankees, Angels, or Dodgers is apparent. What is rather unsettling, however, is how similar his prescriptions read in both books, even though they were written a decade apart. Business has grown, revenue streams have been augmented, and yet the same problems plague both teams and cities. In a 1997 collection, edited with fellow economist Roger G. Noll, entitled *Sports, Jobs, and Taxes: The Economic Impact of Sports Teams and Stadiums*, Zimbalist undertakes the task of trying to price out the benefit of a city paying for a stadium to keep a team. As the collection’s Foreword indicates, “In every case, the authors find that the local economic impact of sports teams and facilities is far smaller than proponents allege; in some cases it is negative.” This leads the authors to conclude that “the unattractive economics of stadiums raise a second issue: if stadiums are poor investments, why, in the

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew Zimbalist, *May the Best Team Win: Baseball Economics and Public Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 2.

era of limited government and skepticism about the value of public construction projects, are expensive stadiums still being subsidized?” Noll and Zimbalist argue that the main forces responsible for the routinely predictable result of the stadium question are “local politics...and the bargaining power that sports teams now enjoy because of their scarcity.”<sup>16</sup> Yet without exception, each time a team has sought a publicly funded stadium they have found a provider, whether it be in their current location or elsewhere. It is the contention of this paper that those like Zimbalist and Noll who find both explanations and solutions in the economy leave out a critical piece of the team-city relationship: the role of professional sports franchises in the construction and development of community identity.

In a review of *Baseball and Billions*, Benjamin Rader presents an especially canny critique of Zimbalist’s argument as a whole: “Pursuing the business of baseball mainly from the standpoint of microeconomic theory, Zimbalist neglects cultural and psychic considerations that frequently lead the baseball principals to ignore rational decision making.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, when it comes to economic decisions in pro sports, the decision makers frequently think like fans, or at least like semi-participants, rather than like economists. It is precisely because Zimbalist neglects the influence of these other benefits that I argue his corrections born of microeconomic theory are incomplete at best and may even exacerbate certain problems. While economic remedies may transform professional sports into a more recognizably capitalist market, there is no

<sup>16</sup> Roger G. Noll and Andrew Zimbalist, *Sports, Jobs, and Taxes: The Economic Impact of Sports Teams and Stadiums* (Washington, D.C.; Brookings Institution Press, 1997), vii-viii.

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin Rader, Review of *Baseball and Billions: A Probing Look Inside the Big Business of Our National Pastime* by Andrew Zimbalist. *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (1993): 1173.



guarantee that the fan experience – and thus the psychological benefits – would be preserved. In order to understand how community identity has been conceptualized, formed, affected, and developed by local professional clubs three communities are analyzed – Brooklyn, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C. These communities were chosen specifically because they all endured the loss of a professional team to relocation, which gives each city a unique insight into the worst-case scenario of the hostage situation. Moreover, after exploring various types of sources I concluded that people are most cognizant about their experience after these losses, making memoirs and personal histories a richer mine for discussion of identity.

Each community receives extensive (but not exclusive) treatment in its chapter. The chapters are designed to explore the most stark or unique cultural and psychological traits of each community's experience while still keeping in consideration that professional sports are also a business. In other words, while the community experience carries primacy of place, economic discussion has not been abandoned entirely in favor of a dialectical or theoretical discussion of ideas like community identity or historical memory. For the purposes of this paper, experience is equated with reality, and ideas like historical memory act as a piece of this reality rather than as a metahistorical guide.

Chapter 1 focuses on Brooklyn, whose shocking loss of the Dodgers after the 1957 season set the tone for every hostage stadium negotiation that has occurred since. This chapter focuses on the formative and shaping nature, the give and take, that American cities had with professional baseball teams in the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Juxtaposed against attendance records and performance results for other cities and ball clubs of the time, the memories of Dodger loyalists – especially Doris Kearns Goodwin – illustrate the severe level of anguish that Brooklynites suffered and provide a blueprint of fear for each city threatened with the relocation of their team.

Chapter 2 focuses on Milwaukee, which, after gaining the Braves in 1953 lost them to Atlanta after the 1965 season. Milwaukee’s story focuses on the relationships between cities in the larger context of American culture. The chapter explores a city’s “need” to attain or retain its “Major League” status as part of a comparative self-value judgment (i.e. boosterism) with other cities. It also compares the way that geography influenced the community identity of Braves fans with the experience of Dodger fans.

Finally, Chapter 3 explores Washington, D.C. and its team relocation experiences. Due to a demographic makeup that is significantly different from those in Brooklyn and Milwaukee (and unique to the United States), Washington D.C.’s community identity appears to be more related to – if not predictive of – the general modern fan experience. The nation’s capital provides some interesting insights into locational loyalty, spectator consumption patterns, and a process I have termed fan decentralization.

Professional sports cannot escape the economic influences that underlie their existence, but neither can its markets escape the oft-irrational yet influential voice of their consumers. The application of only micro- or macroeconomic theory is not likely to present remedies to problematic economic decisions. Psychological and cultural benefits are part and parcel of the professional sports cosmos, and scholars and fans alike will do well to be mindful of this complicated and sometimes contradictory reality.

## Chapter 1

### Brooklyn: “We Hardly Ever Won and It Didn’t Matter.”

When Boston Braves owner Lou Perini finally succumbed to the external financial pressures surrounding his team and moved them to Milwaukee, he was well aware of the local impact of his team’s relocation: “He was very apologetic. He was sorry for the loyal Braves fans of Boston, few as they were; sorry for the business Boston would lose; sorry for the baseball writers who would be shifted to other assignments. It was obvious, he said, that Boston could no longer support two teams, that it was a one-team town, and that the team in preferred undoubtedly was the Red Sox.”<sup>18</sup> The process of team relocation seems to follow an economic paradigm that could be attributed to any business relocating. The essential, irreplaceable components of the business – in this case the team ownership and front office – ultimately relocate with the business to its new base of operation. The unskilled labor – ushers, gate workers, concession vendors, and other employees whose duties were tied to the day-to-day operation of the parks – would simply lose their jobs. However, it is important to remember that even this employment is seasonal. The direct impact that a professional sports team has on the economy is still debated (and is dealt with more in-depth in the following chapter), however this very cursory deconstruction of it seems to suggest that relocation’s immediate economic effects are minimal.

Milwaukee welcomed the Braves with open arms, with the local *Milwaukee Sentinel* devoting its April 14, 1953 edition specially to the Braves’ first home game.<sup>19</sup> In

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<sup>18</sup> Harold Kaese, *The Boston Braves 1871-1953* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 285.

<sup>19</sup> The headline for that Tuesday’s edition read “Braves Win! Open Here Today” and featured Red Thisend’s story of Braves pitcher Max Surkont’s 3-hit shutout the day before in Cincinnati.

successive years Baltimore and Kansas City would do the same for the Browns (now Orioles) and Athletics. The story that the media told echoed, in many ways, Perini's sentiment that "Boston could no longer support two teams." Bill Veeck, owner of the St. Louis Browns from 1951 until their move to Baltimore, considered St. Louis to also be a city that was not large enough to house multiple franchises.<sup>20</sup> The idea that a city could be sizeable "enough" to hold more than one franchise speaks to an ability for the local market to provide a level of revenue that could keep the team in business regardless of performance. Author Rudy Marzano argues that this is true, blaming television for the eventual financial pinch that drove the Browns to Baltimore. Marzano claims that St. Louis fans "were loyal to the game, [supporting] the St. Louis Browns through year after year of futility; St. Louis was a city of 815,000 that supported two teams for more than 50 years until television inroads drove one of them to Baltimore in 1954."<sup>21</sup> Marzano is partially correct in understanding the rather obvious point that television had drastically changed the revenue streams of professional sports. Before television drastically altered these streams, baseball could correlate financial health and attendance figures with confidence. However, a closer look at team performance and attendance figures in comparison with population size lends some credence to the existence of "one-team town(s)" that Perini talked about.

After the Athletics' move from Philadelphia to Kansas City in 1955, only two cities remained hosts to multiple teams: Chicago and New York. Boston, St. Louis, and Philadelphia had all once housed two teams, but were now the homes of only one each.

<sup>20</sup> Bill Veeck, *VEECK – As in Wreck* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Rudy Marzano, *The Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1940s: How Robinson, MacPhail, Reiser and Rickey Changed Baseball* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), 11.

Table 1 presents a composite of the league achievements – or perhaps underachievements – of the Braves, Browns, and Athletics from 1943 up through 1954 or their relocation, whichever came first.

	World Series Victories	Pennants	7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> Place Finishes	Winning Percentage	100-Loss Seasons
Boston Braves	0	1	1	.492	0
St. Louis Browns	0	1	7	.418	3
Philadelphia Athletics	0	0	6	.420	4
TOTAL	0	2	14	.441	7

**Table 1: Relocated Team Achievements, 1943-1954.<sup>22</sup> Information is a composite of each team's individual data, found in the Statistical Appendix, which was compiled from the information provided at [www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com).**

What this table illustrates rather starkly is the futility of these three franchises over the decade leading up to their relocation. The loyalty and support that Marzano claims St. Louis had for the Browns, for example, was likely buoyed by their lone American League Pennant – which happened to come in 1944 during the heart of American involvement in World War II. The reality of the St. Louis narrative appears to be that even a “city of 815,000” (which was in fact closer to 850,000<sup>23</sup>) was not large enough to produce the necessary levels of interest, attendance, and revenue to support two professional baseball teams, especially when one of those teams lost nearly 60 percent of its games. Perini’s assertion that Boston was a “one-team town” parallels this idea, as Boston’s population in the 1950s was only about 50,000 people less than that of St. Louis.

The question of whether or not there is a population threshold that will support more than one team regardless of performance becomes even more interesting when

<sup>22</sup> Data is collected up until 1955 or relocation, whichever happened first. Boston has data for 1943-1952, St. Louis for 1943-1953, and Philadelphia 1943-1954.

<sup>23</sup> “Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1950,” U.S. Bureau of the Census, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab18.txt>.

analyzing the case of the Athletics. Even in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Athletics manager Connie Mack purposely manipulated his roster in order to avoid winning or losing too much, famously dismantling his AL championship teams of 1929-1931 through the intentional sale of his best players to other, richer owners.<sup>24</sup> By intentionally avoiding extended performance extremes, Mack was able to generate business in a rather organic fashion. Doubt and curiosity about the team lured fans to Shibe Park. From a population standpoint Philadelphia was significantly larger than both Boston and St. Louis. The 1950 U.S. Census lists Philadelphia's population at just over 2 million, making it roughly two and a half times as large as either Boston or St. Louis, yet it too was unable to keep afloat two teams when one performed as poorly as the Athletics did.

In comparison, the performance of Chicago's Cubs and White Sox over the same time period suggests that there is in fact a population level at which a city can support two teams regardless of their on-field performance.

	World Series Victories	Pennants	7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> Place Finishes	Winning Percentage	100-Loss Seasons
Chicago Cubs	0	1	6	.463	0
Chicago White Sox	0	0	2	.490	1
TOTAL	0	1	8	.477	1

Table 2: Chicago Team Achievements, 1943-1955. (Source: Statistical Appendix, [www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com))

As with the Braves, Browns, and Athletics, neither the Cubs nor the White Sox won a World Series from 1943-1955, with the lone pennant for the city of Chicago coming from the Cubs in 1945. The rate of seventh or eighth place finishes among the relocated teams was 0.42 – for the Cubs and White Sox 0.31. The higher individual and aggregate

<sup>24</sup> Rader, *Baseball*, 150.

winning percentages of the Chicago teams, as well as the lone 100-loss season, show that the Cubs and White Sox did essentially perform better than their relocated counterparts. (Although the Braves individually fared better than both of the Chicago teams, their aggregate is dragged down by the abysmal performances of the Browns and Athletics.) But how much better, really, were the Chicago teams than the relocated group? How significant a difference is the 0.036 points in combined win percentage? In other words, was their performance on the field different enough to suggest that either the Cubs or the White Sox could have been one of the relocated teams instead of the Braves, Browns, or Athletics?

In a 156-game season, 0.036 win percentage points is worth approximately 5.5 wins. Looking at the win percentages from the best and worst teams in each season from 1943 to 1955 we find that the average difference between teams was 0.021 points, or 3.3 wins.<sup>25</sup> Thus the average Chicago team for this period finished no more than two places better or worse in the overall MLB standings than the average relocated team. It can then be hypothesized that, based purely on performance, both the Cubs and White Sox should have been at least contenders for relocation to Milwaukee or Baltimore or Kansas City. The attendance figures, however, tell a much different story.

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<sup>25</sup> See Statistical Appendix, Table 6.

Attendance Figures of Teams	Total Attendance (1943-1955)	Average Yearly Attendance	Per Game Attendance	Average League Rank
<b>Boston Braves</b>	7,351,570	735,157	9,610	6.2
<b>St. Louis Browns</b>	4,013,386	364,853	4,787	7.7
<b>Philadelphia Athletics</b>	6,708,790	559,065	7,276	6.6
<b>Chicago Cubs</b>	12,748,209	980,631	12,786	3.6
<b>Chicago White Sox</b>	12,245,733	941,979	12,332	4.2

**Table 3: Attendance Figures for Relocated and Chicago Teams, 1943-1955. (Source: Statistical Appendix and www.baseball-reference.com)**

An initial scan of total attendance for the period reveals a myriad of interesting facts. First, Boston actually drew more spectators – both total and per year – than either of the other two relocated teams, yet was the first franchise to move. Moreover, Boston was the only one of the relocated teams to finish better than fifth in league attendance over this span, ranking fourth in 1947 and an understandable first during the pennant year of 1948. If Braves fans turning out at just shy of 10,000 per home game from 1943-1952 was not enough to keep the team financially afloat it is probably a small miracle that the Browns lasted in St. Louis as long as they did. And if St. Louis fans were as loyal to their team as Rudy Marzano claims, they must have shown their loyalty in ways other than game attendance. Even with an extra year of games, Browns fans barely eclipsed a total attendance number that was half that of the Braves, and their average yearly and per game attendance fell well below half of the Braves. The per-game attendance figure of 4,787 was actually 1,300 spectators less than the average attendance across all of baseball in 1910.<sup>26</sup> The team had regressed in popularity to levels not seen since before the World Series was established in 1903. The Browns capped their inauspicious last decade plus of existence by finishing last in American League attendance nine out of eleven years,

<sup>26</sup> Rader, *Baseball*, 94.



including an incredible eight straight last place attendance finishes from 1946-1953.<sup>27</sup> It seems unlikely then that it could have been television that was responsible for the Browns' relocation, as Marzano argues, especially considering they were a team that eclipsed 500,000 paid fans only three times in its final eleven years, and needed a world war and a miracle pennant run in 1944 to achieve even that. (Even as the pennant winners, the Browns only ranked sixth in American League attendance in 1944.)

The breakdown of attendance for Athletics games in Philadelphia is even more lackluster, as the team, which was able to draw on a population more than two and a half times that of Boston or St. Louis, generated attendance numbers that fell roughly halfway between the Braves and Browns. The Athletics only drawing just over 6.5 million fans in twelve years seems to be a significant outlier given the team's history, the city's geography, and the willingness of fans to attend games expressly to see part or all of the opposing team – an idea that is discussed further in Chapter 3. Not only is Philadelphia itself larger, but its relatively short distance from New York, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh opened the city up to a tourism base of about 10.3 million additional people. This massive possible tourist base was an advantage that St. Louis certainly did not share. Boston may have been able to draw on New York tourists to help attendance numbers, but because those cities as well as Philadelphia housed both American and National League teams, there was not necessarily the rivalry coupling to promote travel and attendance that can be seen today between, for example, the Yankees and the Red Sox, or the Giants and the Dodgers.

Finally, there is the complicating case of Chicago. As discussed above, the Chicago teams did not necessarily perform on the field in a manner more consistent or

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix, Table 8.

significantly better than the three teams that relocated. In fact, the Boston Braves won one more pennant, finished seventh or eighth in the league fewer times, won a slightly higher percentage of their games, and avoided a 100-loss season altogether; all achievements that surpassed the White Sox. Yet the White Sox managed to out-draw the Braves by more than 200,000 fans per year. It should not be surprising that a city four and a half times as large as Boston was able to draw more fans to its games. If anything, it should be surprising that the White Sox didn't draw an even larger number of fans. Yet when the Cubs' attendance records are introduced the relationship between population size, attendance, and performance becomes more clear.

Chicago's National League team provided its fans with a less steady ride than did their American League counterparts. From 1943-1955 the Cubs won one pennant but no World Series, finished seventh or eighth in the league on six occasions but never had a 100-loss season, and won just over 46 percent of their games, all while drawing 500,000 more total fans than the White Sox. Using Chicago as a composite and comparing it to the performance and attendance of the Braves, Browns, and Athletics suggests that there is a population "magic number" of sorts that exists somewhere between the populations of 1950s Philadelphia (2.1 million) and 1950s Chicago (3.6 million). This "magic number" serves to divide the country's urban centers into (at least) two tiers. These tiers in turn dictate the number of teams that any one city could have sustained economically, regardless of each team's performance. Tom Melville also believes that Chicago presented an economically unique case. His evidence is dated much earlier, hearkening back to baseball's formative days: "Only Chicago, then, had the financial leverage to bend eastern baseball to its specific needs and requirements, especially by 1875, when

Chicago's financial benefit to visiting clubs had become so substantial the White Stockings claimed they were virtually subsidizing some eastern ball clubs."<sup>28</sup> Chicago's size lent it a degree of economic power that could stabilize two clubs regardless of their ability to draw spectators with their on-field performance. Modernity seems to confirm this idea to some degree, as the only current cities that house more than one MLB team are the nation's three most populous: New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Obviously, a further exploration of this phenomena by an enterprising econometrist or population theorist could help us better understand not only where the "magic number" is more accurately – after all I have only provided a window, 1.5 million people wide at that<sup>29</sup> – but also it may reveal some of the more obfuscated cultural and psychological benefits that Zimbalist neglects to discuss. For the purposes of the hostage situation surrounding stadium financing, the idea that there exists an acceptable population to team ratio that is sustainable regardless of team performance could be critical. Teams would be hard pressed to convince either the local fans or the media in general that they need publicly funded stadiums in order to simultaneously turn a profit and remain competitive. The revenue existed in the 1950s to prevent either Chicago club from being threatened with relocation, and this at a time when gate receipts and maybe a small portion of concession attendance or sub-licensing were the major ways that teams filled their coffers. Teams had yet to engage with the exceptionally lucrative alternative revenue streams that drive contemporary team finances.

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<sup>28</sup> Melville, *Early Baseball*, 75.

<sup>29</sup> And in reality it is probably less, as Chicago's population has fallen below 3 million since 1950. However, revenue streams have changed greatly since then, so a modern analysis would necessarily have to weight attendance differently.

Given this idea of the market bearing one team, regardless of performance, per a given number of people, the case of the Brooklyn Dodgers and their relocation to Los Angeles stands out even further as anathema in the annals of baseball history. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the same information tracked for the relocated teams and the Chicago clubs, but this time focusing only on New York's three teams.

	World Series Victories	Pennants	7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 <sup>th</sup> Place Finishes	Winning Percentage	100-Loss Seasons
Brooklyn Dodgers	1	6	1	.587	0
New York Giants	1	2	2	.498	0
New York Yankees	8	10	0	.616	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>.567</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table 4: New York Team Achievements, 1943-1957.** (Source: Statistical Appendix and [www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com))

Attendance Figures of Teams	Total Attendance (1943-1957)	Average Yearly Attendance	Per Game Attendance	Average League Rank
Brooklyn Dodgers	17,980,524	1,198,701	15,381	2.1
New York Giants	14,782,613	985,508	12,821	4.1
New York Yankees	24,555,386	1,637,026	21,241	1.2

**Table 5: New York Team Attendance, 1943-1957.** (Source: Statistical Appendix and [www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com))

The 1950s were in many ways the third act of the Yankee dynasty. What had begun with the Babe Ruth acquisition in 1919 and the Murderer's Row team of 1927 now culminated in eight World Series victories in ten appearances and a rather incredible .616 winning percentage. Being the only American League team in New York, the Yankees set up perfectly as the inevitable final hurdle for both the Giants and Dodgers on each team's quest for a World Series championship. The Giants, having been mainstays of the

National League elite under John McGraw during the Dead Ball Era, had relinquished some of their hold on the top of the NL, but still managed to win two pennants and a World Series between 1943 and 1955. Yet it was Brooklyn that saw the most marked improvement.

Brooklyn won one pennant as an independent city (in 1890 as the Bridgegrooms) and then two more (1899 and 1900) as the Superbas just after annexation into the City of Greater New York. While the team had fared well in the lead up to the turn of the century, the next fifty years would not be so kind. In 1902, the final year of pre-World Series baseball, the Superbas finished 27.5 games behind the 103-win Pittsburgh Pirates in the NL pennant race. From 1903 until Jackie Robinson debuted with the Dodgers in 1947, Brooklyn won only three National League pennants (1916 and 1920 as the Robins, and 1941 as the Dodgers) and no World Series. The Robins/Dodgers finished runners up three times in the first forty years of World Series play while finishing seventh or eighth in the division six times. The anguish of Brooklyn's failures was only magnified by the success of their city rivals. The numerous pennant and championship near misses led to Dodger fans adopting the now infamous slogan "Wait Till Next Year."

Unlike the relocated teams, all three New York teams had a history of attendance success. The Yankees had so much success, in fact, that their aggregate alone surpassed the combined numbers of the relocated teams. Credit for these successes can be rather obviously assigned to New York City's massive population. Totaling just shy of 7.9 million people in the 1950 U.S. Census, New York was able to draw its gate receipts from a city four times as large as Philadelphia and ten times the size of Boston or St. Louis. Comparing the successful on-field performance of all three New York teams and

their ability to draw above average crowds with the stability of the mediocre yet well-attended Chicago teams, the data suggests that the New York franchises were insulated from any real threat of relocation. As we know, however, this was not at all the case. The Dodgers, having finally reached the mountaintop and won a World Series (against the Yankees, no less) in 1955 would be gone only three years later, taking the Giants with them to begin baseball's westward expansion.

Despite the elusiveness of a championship, Brooklyn residents forged a bond with the team that seemed to permeate all walks of life. Doris Kearns Goodwin recalls in her memoir – appropriately titled *Wait Till Next Year* – that as she traveled the country promoting other works all anyone wanted to talk about was baseball and the Dodgers:

The reaction was startling. Almost everywhere, as I traveled the lecture circuit, I encountered people less anxious to hear my tales of Lyndon Johnson, the Kennedys, or the Roosevelts than they were to share memories of those wondrous days when baseball almost ruled the world. The enthusiastic intensity of their recollections revealed that they were remembering not simply the history of a team or a group of athletes but their own history, and especially their youthful days.<sup>30</sup>

The idea that “baseball almost ruled the world” is unique but apropos of America at the time. Goodwin's story begins at age six, when she received a scorebook from her father in time for the 1949 season.<sup>31</sup> While America was concerning itself with the promulgation of worldwide capitalism as a counter measure to postwar Soviet expansion, it also had previously unseen levels of individual spending power, as the elevated wartime economy had continued over into the postwar period. People could attend baseball, that national pastime, in ever-increasing numbers, as financial prosperity

<sup>30</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 9.

<sup>31</sup> Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year*, 13.

became the norm. Yet Goodwin is not exactly talking about some sort of imagined pro-capitalist conspicuous consumption approach to understanding how baseball “almost ruled the world.” Instead her idea, found throughout *Wait Till Next Year*, is that baseball had become a truly translational community medium. Everything from casual conversations to the deepest bonds of friendship seemed to at least originate with a discussion of one’s favorite baseball team. Whether it was a boy at the beach, the butchers at the Bryn Mawr Meat Market, or her best friend Elaine, Goodwin’s social interaction revolved around which team was “yours.”<sup>32</sup> Growing up in Rockville Center, a suburb of New York, Goodwin posits that the scattering of team allegiance was a result of a sort of fan migration: “As earlier immigrants had brought their ethnic bonds with them to America, the settlers of suburbia had, for the most part, carried their baseball fidelity from their borough of origin.”<sup>33</sup> Thus New Yorkers showed a willingness to redefine whatever new community they were building in suburbia with the same division of allegiance by which they had organized the boroughs. Tom Melville identifies New York as the game of baseball’s foundational center, not just of form but also of cultural importance. But as much as New York gave to baseball, Melville argues, the game gave back. He presents a theory as to why baseball specifically became so important to the community identity of New Yorkers:

The other influence that could have possibly moderated New York baseballs’ accelerating achievement focus was an attachment to geographic or institutional loyalties, in which players and supporters recognized an obligation to place or purpose above and beyond competitive success. This was the pattern first class English cricket followed, with clubs developing inalienable attachments to specific counties, and hence an institutional obligation to geographic loyalty.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; 64-65

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>34</sup> Melville, *Early Baseball* 20.

Goodwin echoes this “obligation to place or purpose,” which can be more simply stated as fandom, in part of her interview for Ken Burns’s documentary *Baseball*:

I think in the past that certainly Brooklyn’s character was defined by the Brooklyn Dodgers. I mean, even just the name Dodgers coming from these trolley cars that everybody had to dodge. The idea that Brooklyn felt a stepchild to New York City, and that somehow the Dodgers, the Bums, were stepchilds [*sic*] too, that were going to show the hoity-toity New Yorkers that we were really better than them, defined who Brooklyn was. And even in Long Island, where I grew up, I felt that sense of Brooklyn, and it was all part of the Dodgers. I don’t know that that exists today in the same way, that you define who you are through your team and through your city. And I think it’s a loss, it means that people are more fragmented, they’ve got themselves and a few friends, but they don’t have that group sense, unless there’s a win, but that’s not the same, that’s not what this was all about, *we hardly ever won and it didn’t matter* (emphasis mine).

There are a number of interesting ideas in this quotation, many of which apply to more than just Brooklyn. Some of them will be analyzed later in the paper, but for now there are two that I believe deserve focus. The first is the opening sentence, in which Goodwin asserts that, “Brooklyn’s character was defined by the Dodgers.” Juxtaposed against her later statement that she “felt that sense of Brooklyn, and it was all part *of* the Dodgers,” Goodwin seems to be suggesting that the development of a community identity that was specifically Brooklyn’s could not occur without the Dodgers, nor could the community of Dodgers fans develop their identity without a sense of Brooklyn. This development pattern then, is the “inalienable attachment” and “institutional obligation to geographic loyalty” that Melville describes. Because the “obligation to place or purpose” goes “above and beyond competitive success,” professional sports can function as a unifying power within a disparate community. If soccer historian David Goldblatt is correct, this force is especially strong across socioeconomic or class divides. Goldblatt argues that all around the world and throughout time, “two elements were common...[in soccer]



cultures: the early leakage of the game from the feet of the urban elites to those of the urban poor – and, as a consequence of this, the emergence of powerful local collective identities around [soccer] clubs.”<sup>35</sup> Harold Seymour finds a similar truth in baseball, arguing that a large factor contributing to its swift early growth in popularity was the fact that anyone could afford to play.<sup>36</sup> Seymour’s conception of the idea of baseball’s affordability must be qualified somewhat, though, as the early game was played often without a glove and with few regulations on bat sizes, let alone with the time and travel demands that even Little League all-star teams encounter today. Still, the element of transmission is present, and when the idea of professionalism is applied it can help create a rather crude yet solid historical explanation of this strong geographically based community identity.

The urban elites from whom the games “leaked,” by possessing the capital to play the game in an amateur organizational form, eventually also possessed the connections and familiarity to capitalize on baseball as a business opportunity. (Charles Comiskey is a good example of this process.) Meanwhile, the urban poor that received the game from the elites would find two pathways to participation, either as professional players, or much more likely, as fans of the local team who played the game recreationally but cheered professionally.

Even though this transmission did in effect reinforce a stratification of society along socioeconomic divides, it had the strange effect of simultaneously unifying, as each participant was fulfilled in their roles. Roger Kahn has supported this idea, arguing that

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<sup>35</sup> David Goldblatt, *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Soccer* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), 144.

<sup>36</sup> Harold Seymour, *Baseball: Volume 1. The Early Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 23.

“You may glory in a team triumphant, but you fall in love with a team in defeat.”<sup>37</sup> This became the process whereby loyalty was cemented to a locality and community became a manifestation of this unifying force. The mere existence of the Dodgers was enough; their achievements on the field were an added bonus. Thus for Goodwin, the Dodgers were Brooklyn, and Brooklyn was the Dodgers. It is unsurprising that she found when she set down to write her memoirs that, “I could not talk about my experience as a fan without also telling the story of my life as a young girl reaching adolescence in that deceptively tranquil decade of the nineteen fifties.”<sup>38</sup>

“We hardly ever won and it didn’t matter.” This is probably the more fascinating quote, as Goodwin is stating clearly that the mere existence of the Dodgers was enough; their achievements on the field were of a secondary importance. Each layer of Goodwin’s identity, from herself as an individual to the larger community of Brooklynites was predicated on the existence of the Dodgers. It is understandable, then, the venom with which many former Dodger fans recall the shocking relocation of the team to Los Angeles following the 1957 season. Many, Goodwin included, chose biblical analogies when forced to describe the anguish they felt when it was announced that O’Malley would be taking the team with him:

The Dodgers officially announced their move a few days later in a terse statement that took no account of our feelings. Even the Yankees had the courtesy to issue a statement of regret that New York was losing the Dodgers and the Giants. In the hearts of Brooklyn fans, O’Malley had secured his place in a line of infamy which now crossed the centuries from Judas Iscariot to Benedict Arnold to Walter F. O’Malley. Effigies of the Dodger owner were burned on the streets of Brooklyn. It was all over. Never again would the streets of New York be filled with passionate

<sup>37</sup> Roger Kahn, *The Boys of Summer* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), xii.

<sup>38</sup> Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year*, 10.

arguments about which of the city's three teams had the best center fielder, the best shortstop, the best catcher.<sup>39</sup>

Peter Golenbock, in *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers*, uses exclusively biblical allusions for the section headings of his final chapter: "The Exodus," "In Search of Judas O'Malley," "The Betrayal," "The Last Supper," "The Mourners," and "The Ashes."<sup>40</sup> Rudy Marzano describes himself as "a Brooklyn Dodger fanatic who to this day has never forgiven those who moved the team to Los Angeles," while Walter O'Malley is "the kind of [man]... who broke the heart of his native city."<sup>41</sup> Damon Rice takes a softer, if no less negative tack in his fatalistic interpretation of his time as a Dodger fan, portraying O'Malley as somewhat a buffoon who "was out to ease the tension of loyal Dodger fans... in a bizarre manner" when rumors of the move began. By the time it was clear that it was going to happen, however, Rice writes that, "Walter O'Malley wasn't satisfied killing only one of New York's great National League traditions. He was out to destroy both... Never was the owner of the Dodgers more devious, or cold-blooded, than during the summer of 1957."<sup>42</sup> Even Roger Kahn's prose paused to impart a few shots at O'Malley, complaining that he "pretends to be pure Brooklyn Celt," and that "as his fortune grew, pettiness invaded his style."<sup>43</sup> Each memoir written about the Dodgers presents the same story of betrayal, heartache, and loss.

Why, then, did the Dodgers relocate? Their attendance was healthy, they were performing better on the field than they had in seventy-five years, and they had a strong

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Golenbock, *Bums: An Oral History of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), 428-451.

<sup>41</sup> Marzano, *Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1940s*, vi; 6.

<sup>42</sup> Damon Rice, *Seasons Past* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1965), 425-432.

<sup>43</sup> Kahn, *Boys of Summer*, 422-424.

tie to the community identity of Brooklyn as well as the rest of New York. In following with the biblical allusions, many writers pinpoint O'Malley's greed. Some argue that while he was profitable in Brooklyn, he was not profitable enough.<sup>44</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin argues that O'Malley, like Perini and Veeck and Philadelphia Athletics owner Arnold Johnson before him, "was able to justify his move on economic grounds, [though] the transactions signaled the ever-increasing intrusions of business considerations into the national pastime."<sup>45</sup> This claim of the "ever-increasing intrusion of business" is a place where Goodwin has allowed her memories to supersede the factual record. The way the game of baseball naturally divides labor, and the intentional way the formation of the National League created a distinct separation of management and production actually mimics traditional capitalist business models. In 1965 Ralph Andreano wrote, "From a realistic viewpoint Big League Baseball has been big business for nearly a century. A national magazine noted, as far back as 1886, that: 'What was formerly a pastime has now become a business, capital is invested from business motives and the officers and stockholders of the different (major league) clubs include men of social standing and established business capacity.'"<sup>46</sup> Neil Sullivan argues in *The Dodgers Move West* that O'Malley's decision was perpetuated as much by New York politicians' willingness to let him leave as it was by Los Angeles politicians' desire to acquire a team. (By not labeling O'Malley a deceiver of biblical proportions, Sullivan actually rehabilitates O'Malley's image – if only slightly.) Business opportunity seems the most feasible explanation for O'Malley's ultimate decision considering Los Angeles appeared much more willing to

<sup>44</sup> Marzano, *Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1940s*, 203.

<sup>45</sup> Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year*, 223.

<sup>46</sup> Ralph Andreano, *No Joy in Mudville: The Dilemma of Major League Baseball* (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing, 1965), vii.

meet his demands, but the consequences of Dodgers fans' reactions had a similarly important effect on the future of city-team relationships.

The story of the Dodgers' relocation and their fans' reactions presented each city that housed a team with a blueprint of fear that would become omnipresent. If the Bums could return to elite performance, engage in a hugely important social moment like the debut of Jackie Robinson, average over one million fans per year, and still end up relocating to the other side of the country the message seemed clear: no team was safe. And moreover, the stability of community identity was now uncertain. What this said about the role of sports in constructing community identity, though, was even more intriguing. For all the important roles the Dodgers played in forming, shaping, and representing the community of Brooklyn, for as inseparable from their own identity and experiences as fans like Doris Kearns Goodwin found the team to be, and even for all the history that Brooklyn and greater New York had with the game of baseball, participation proved to be fragile. It is also possible that the community identity to which the Dodgers contributed was ephemeral, its nostalgic place in the historical memory of Dodgers fans projected as duplicable in other cities when in reality it was only the unique conditions in Brooklyn that produced this relationship. After all, new sports are not being invented and professionalized at a rapid enough pace to provide every community with the chance to construct their identity the same way that Brooklyn and the Dodgers did. Moreover, the context of American society that surrounded the 1950s was incomparable to another historical situation, American or otherwise. Yet the reaction in Brooklyn is an example of the worst-case scenario if a local team is allowed to relocate and as such hangs implicitly over every discussion of stadium financing. Since the Dodgers left New York,

every community faced with the option of acceding to the team's demands or losing the team chose the former, which almost always meant footing the bill for a new stadium. The idea that no team and no community were protected from the forces that could result in relocation was a significant influence on the decision making processes of other cities. Despite the unique history of Brooklyn and the Dodgers, the paradigm of threat and loss became entwined in all future conversations of stadium construction. The hostage template had been created.

## Chapter 2

### “The greatest thing to happen to Milwaukee since beer.”

When I explained to my grandma that I had transferred universities in order to pursue baseball as part of my scholarly research, she decided that every time we brought up sports or school she would tell me as many stories as she could about her trips to Milwaukee to see the Braves. Born in Chicago in 1919, Grandma Meg moved to northeastern Wisconsin with her family when she was only a little younger than Doris Kearns Goodwin was when she received the scorebook from her father. Yet grandma had no loyalties to either the White Sox or Cubs and, as far as I could tell from her stories, never really found interest in baseball until she was an adult. The stories she told seemed recall an enjoyable time at each game she attended, though, and they all included two common threads: a short trip to Green Bay with church friends where they would board a bus that provided round-trip transportation to the games for the seemingly impossible price of \$3, and Eddie Mathews playing third base and having a good game for the Braves. In fact, if you compiled Mathews’ career from grandma’s stories, he never had a bad game and was the best hitter in the history of baseball.<sup>47</sup> More interesting is the fact that it wasn’t until she lived three hours away from the closest professional team that my grandma began to take even a passing interest in baseball. Even though she was very young, her time in Chicago resulted in no loyalties to the local teams, a much different experience than Goodwin’s. Likely, this was because my great-grandfather was not much of a baseball fan himself, and thus grandma had no one to hand down to her an interest in the national pastime as Goodwin did. At the same time,

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<sup>47</sup> In fairness to grandma, Mathews compiled impressive numbers in his time in Milwaukee. He made nine All-Star teams, including eight straight from 1955-1962, finished second in MVP voting twice, and led the NL in homers twice.

however, I would argue that as much as Doris Kearns Goodwin's experiences illustrated the typical experience of Dodger fans, so did Grandma Meg's experiences illustrate how Milwaukee and the Braves developed their own brand of community identity.

Unlike Brooklyn, Milwaukee did not have almost a century of professional baseball to influence the way it related its community identity to the Braves. Nor had the city been part of the epicenter of the game's development. It did have at least some history of baseball, though it was mostly traveling teams and minor league franchises. Cities did develop connections with minor league teams, however as Andrew Zimbalist and Arthur T. Johnson have noted those connections were economically fragile and even more susceptible to the change that television would bring to the game in the 1960s than were the connections between cities and big league clubs.<sup>48</sup> This obviously made the acquisition of a major league club much more attractive, as it would likely provide a more stable experience. Expressly for the purpose of luring a major league ballclub to the city, in 1950 Milwaukee broke ground on County Stadium. It appeared that Milwaukee would get its first shot at the big leagues when St. Louis Browns owner Bill Veeck, who had previously owned the minor league Milwaukee Brewers team, tried to bring his struggling American League squad to town. The move was blocked, however, by none other than Boston Braves owner Lou Perini, who also owned the Brewers at that time, giving him control of the territorial rights to Milwaukee. "Faced now with the possibility of substantial financial losses in both Boston and Milwaukee, Perini caved in. On March 13, just ten days after rejecting Veeck's bid, Perini called for an emergency

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<sup>48</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 110. Arthur T. Johnson, *Minor League Baseball and Local Economic Development*. *Sport and Society Series* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 116.



meeting of baseball owners to request a move to Milwaukee.”<sup>49</sup> The vote was unanimously approved and the Braves moved into County Stadium for the 1953 season.

The acquisition of the Braves had two immediate and distinctive effects. First, it legitimized Milwaukee as an urban center both in the city’s self-perception and nationally. Milwaukee was no longer “bush league,” but rather was a “Major League” city.



Figure 1: Front Page of the April 9, 1953 Milwaukee Sentinel

<sup>49</sup> Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 170.

Never were Milwaukee's feelings of legitimacy more on display, however, than after their stunning World Series victory in 1957:

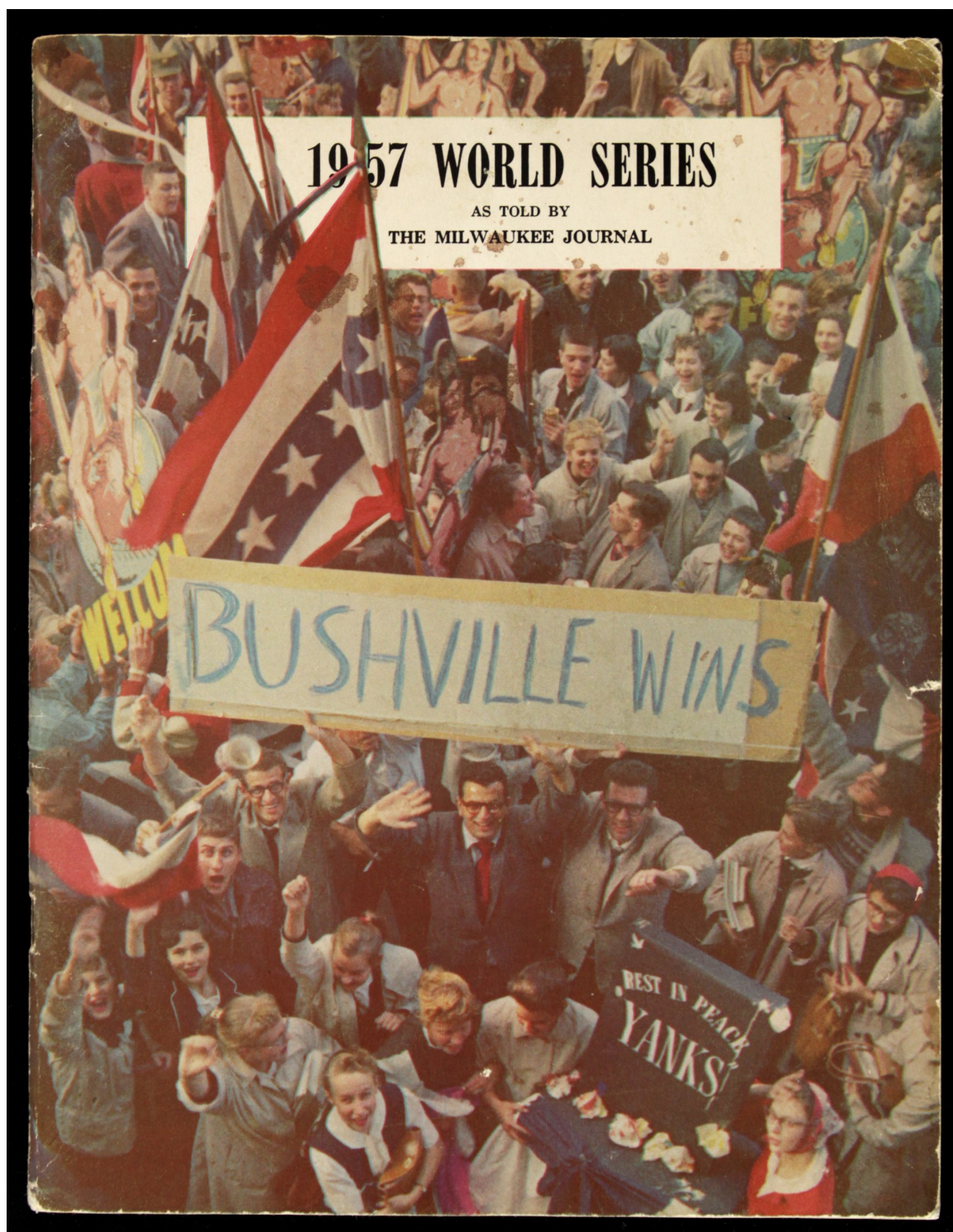


Figure 2: Cover of a special World Series recap magazine published by the *Milwaukee Journal*.

Second, it created a new type of community around which fans of the game could begin to construct a new community identity. Like Brooklyn, the community of Braves fans were strongly organized around physical geography. Unlike Brooklyn, though, Milwaukee's fan base extended well beyond a neighborhood or even the city's urban center. The state of Wisconsin as a whole – or at least those who were not baseball-crazy enough to have already affiliated themselves with the White Sox or the Cubs – comprised a new community of Milwaukee Braves fans. And their support for the team was immediate and impressive.

	World Series Victories	Pennants	Last or Second-To-Last Finishes <sup>50</sup>	Winning Percentage	100-Loss Seasons
Milwaukee Braves	1	2	0	.563	0

**Table 6: Milwaukee Braves Achievements, 1953-1965.** (Source: Statistical Appendix and [www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com))

Attendance Figures of Teams	Total Attendance (1953-1965)	Average Yearly Attendance	Per Game Attendance	Average League Rank
Milwaukee Braves	19,551,234	1,503,941	19,243	3.5

**Table 7: Milwaukee Braves Attendance, 1953-1965.** (Source: Statistical Appendix and [www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com))

In 1953 the Braves drew over 1.8 million fans for their inaugural season in Milwaukee. The following year they became the first non-New York team to surpass 2 million paid attendees. In all, the Braves would finish first in National League attendance for six consecutive years and surpass the 2 million mark four times (also consecutive). The fans like my grandma that did get out to see the games were rewarded with a strong,

<sup>50</sup> In 1962 the National League expanded to 10 teams, adding the Houston Colt .45s and the New York Mets and bringing MLB's total number of teams to 20.

competitive club that finished lower than third in the NL only once in its first decade – finishing fourth in 1962. Moreover, in 1957, the Braves won the World Series, defeating the powerhouse Yankees 4-3 in a seven game series. The championship year, however, would be the apex. The Yankees would find revenge the following year in a similarly thrilling seven game duel, the Braves would not win another pennant, and after the World Series victory attendance dropped steadily, falling below 1 million spectators for the first time in 1962. The attendance drop is perhaps most startling, given that in their 13 seasons in Milwaukee the Braves never finished below .500. The interest in the new team had worn off – and television did not help matters. Especially for fans like my grandma, the chance to still see the Braves and be saved not only the time but also the expense of travelling was probably an attractive option. Yet the connection had been made. Milwaukee, if ever so briefly, had become one of Zimbalist’s “worthy” cities – the Cream City was finally “Major League.” The status would be temporary. By 1966, the Braves had been sold to a new ownership group and relocated to Atlanta, leaving Milwaukee once again without a big league club.

The acquisition of the Braves was critical for Milwaukee because the city had, much like Brooklyn, been part of an intense geographic rivalry that, while not limited to sporting contest, was more than happy to use the game of baseball as a comparative tool. Neil Sullivan wrote that, to Brooklyn, both Manhattan and the Yankees “dominated their respective spheres in a manner that conveyed arrogance and inevitability.”<sup>51</sup> For Milwaukee, Chicago had played a similar role. Able to exert enough economic influence to allow White Sox owner William Hulbert to act as the dictator of the National League

<sup>51</sup> Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*, 15.

while he owned the team, and exhibiting an “almost pathological fixation upon its perceived right” to this influence, Chicago was Manhattan’s Midwestern counterpart in baseball and in general.<sup>52</sup> Where Brooklyn yearned for competitive success to prove its legitimacy, Milwaukee was simply hoping for the chance to compete.

In his book *Early Baseball and the Rise of the National League*, Tom Melville argues that there are two “orientations” or sets of goals that communities can assign to their sporting culture, which in turn becomes a cognizant act of self-definition or self-identification. The first of these Melville dubs “expression,” or an orientation that “generally reflects a concern with extra-competitive values and expectations, which, historically, have ranged from a concern with moral character, social purpose, or ideological identity, but [have been] most strongly based upon locality or community.” The catch with expression, however, is that “this orientation is willing to compromise competitive standards or requirements for the sake of the right to participate.” The other is termed “achievement” and is an example of “the belief that sports organizations strictly reflect the ‘best against the best.’” This orientation also “demand[s] competitive resources be unconditionally utilized towards success (whatever may be the social consequence) while also insisting there be strict limitations and qualification standards for such competition.”<sup>53</sup>

Expression is probably best analogized with the modern organization of Little League, where all one must do is sign up, sell a few candy bars, and show up for the game in order to play an inning or two in the field and get the chance to take at least one at bat. Yet even in Little League expression doesn’t last long. The best players are

<sup>52</sup> Melville, *Early Baseball*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

merged together to form All-Star teams that spend the dog days of summer travelling the state and the country playing against other cities' All-Star teams for a chance to eventually compete in the Little League World Series. Milwaukee, for some reason, seemed to never reach past the expression orientation to achievement – at least not with the Braves. The city welcomed the Braves with open arms and incredible enthusiasm (see photo above on page 40). Famously, one merchant exclaimed to a *Life* magazine correspondent when asked about the acquisition of the Braves that, “This is the greatest thing to happen to Milwaukee since beer.”<sup>54</sup> A report by the Association of Commerce claimed that the acquisition of the Braves had “pumped between \$5 million and \$8 million into the local economy in increased taxi, restaurant, hotel, and retail revenues.”<sup>55</sup> As mentioned above, intrigued fans came out in unprecedented numbers to fill County Stadium’s 33,000 seats. Harold Kaese and R.G. Lynch explain that, “The fans came in buses...so many buses that they created problems. The bus park for forty vehicles overflowed and was increased to accommodate eighty, overflowed again and once more was enlarged. The peak came at a Chicago Cubs night game in July, when one hundred and fifty buses created the granddaddy of all traffic jams.”<sup>56</sup> Undoubtedly, my grandma was on one of those buses – although I never got the chance to ask her about the overflow in the parking lot.

The buses weren’t the only part of her Braves trips that represented a new community built around Milwaukee’s new team. It has been estimated that about 250,000 of the admissions that the Cubs and White Sox drew each year came from

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<sup>54</sup> *Life* (July 6, 1953).

<sup>55</sup> Tygiel, *Past Time*, 174.

<sup>56</sup> Harold Kaese and R.G. Lynch, *The Milwaukee Braves* (New York: G.M. Putnam’s Sons, 1954.), 290.

Wisconsin residents, meaning that just over 1,600 fans on average at any given Chicago game were Wisconsinites. Many of them, however, were repeat attendees and most were drawn from southeastern Wisconsin.<sup>57</sup> While the arrival of the Braves likely drew a number of these fans back from their Chicago voyages, it is interesting to note that the Cubs took the brunt of the attendance hit, dropping from second in the National League in attendance in 1952 to sixth in 1953 as total admissions for the team were reduced by just over 260,000. Comparably, the White Sox lost only about 40,000 paid admissions while actually moving up a spot in AL rankings from third to second.<sup>58</sup> The reason for this uneven decline is somewhat obvious, as the Cubs now had an NL rival only a little more than an hour away. There is no follow up research or comment that posits whether the White Sox still drew those same fans, even though their games would be the only chance for Wisconsinites to see some of the AL's great players like Yogi Berra, Bob Lemon, or Larry Doby. Meanwhile, people from all over the state flocked to see and to celebrate the Braves, with many of Milwaukee's smaller suburbs like Cedarburg and West Bend hosting their own "days" or "nights" at the park. In more distant places the arrival of the Braves had an impact on the economy that, however temporary, was noteworthy, such as in Sauk City where the first passenger train in 20 years was run special into Milwaukee for a game. The Braves name was also adopted and co-opted by every organization imaginable, appearing in everything from the name of a high school athletic conference to the special on the menu at an Algoma hamburger stand.<sup>59</sup> The Braves did not just represent Milwaukee, but were an emblem of a larger sense of state pride and association, if only for a short time.

<sup>57</sup> Kaese and Lynch, *Milwaukee Braves*, 289.

<sup>58</sup> See Statistical Appendix.

<sup>59</sup> Kaese and Lynch, *Milwaukee Braves*, 291.

The gusto with which Milwaukee residents not only attended games but also celebrated the Braves' arrival outside the nine innings a day at County Stadium exemplifies Daniel Nathan's assertion that "sports have what seems to be or feels like a unique ability to enable disparate people to experience something approximating *communitas*...an intense community spirit, a feeling of solidarity and togetherness." Implicit in this idea of *communitas* (and discussed more in the following chapter) is the notion that, in its unifying force, *communitas* can overcome – and thus does not necessarily represent – geographical boundaries, tensions, or differences. Because the overarching link was celebration of the Braves, the entire state could unite in the cause of baseball. It may have been a five-hour plus trip for Eau Claire residents, for example, but the Braves were still a "local" team. Nathan further argues "that rooting for local athletes and home teams often symbolizes a community's preferred understanding of itself, and that doing so is an expression of connectedness. It's an expression of public pride and pleasure, a source of group and personal identity."<sup>60</sup>

For Milwaukee, this simultaneous expression of group and personal identity was a perfect medium through which to translate its diverse and not quite unified culture. For most of its existence, the city lacked a singular identity to overwrite its cultural pluralism. Like New York, Milwaukee was a grouping of ethnic enclaves whose geographic separation resulted in inter-neighborhood tension similar to that between boroughs. Yet where the Dodgers stood as Brooklyn's symbol on the ball field, battling against its neighbors in the Bronx (Yankees) and Manhattan (Giants), Milwaukee's single team allowed the city to create a more unified identity from the disparate people that Nathan

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<sup>60</sup> Daniel Nathan, ed., *Rooting for the Home Team: Sport, Community, and Identity* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 3.



refers to. Likely nothing more than happy coincidence, various groups of Milwaukeeans were able to single out players on the Braves' team who shared their ethnic or religious heritage and celebrate them:

Jews put on a "night" for Sid Gordon, and Germans for Warren Spahn; Italians gave one for Sibby Sisty; Negroes for [Billy] Bruton, Jim Pendleton and George Crowe...Lutherans turned out 10,000 strong to see Andy Pafko receive a Chevrolet sedan and other gifts which they had contributed. Poles gave a birthday part at home plate for Max Surkont and 35,000 fans sang "Happy Birthday" for the new Duke of Mitchell Street.<sup>61</sup>

Shared heritage was not necessary to receive a shower of gifts from the fans, however, as Eddie Mathews was presented with a new watch just for playing well (he led the league in home runs that year), the Ozaukee Country Club hosted a dinner-dance for players, and during one celebration of Max Surkont – perhaps even his birthday party at home plate – fans gifted his son with a brand new tricycle.<sup>62</sup> Where Doris Kearns Goodwin argued that the Dodgers and Brooklyn supplied mutual influence in the creation of their community identity, the Braves served as an outlet to unite and celebrate the community identity of not only Milwaukee, but also on a larger scale the state of Wisconsin. Even though Goodwin had argued that the Dodgers "hardly ever won and it didn't matter," the reality was that Brooklynites and Dodger fans still defined themselves on a basis of achievement, not expression. The mantra "Wait Till Next Year" was a manifestation of Brooklyn's unrealized championship dreams. In contrast, Milwaukee never had the time to develop an identity based around achievement, focusing instead on expression. Partly, this was because the team arrived in 1953, won a World Series in 1957, and was relocated to Atlanta after the 1965 season; there was no championship drought or history of seasons of near misses. Also factoring into this was the peculiarity that attendance at

<sup>61</sup> Kaese and Lynch, *Milwaukee Braves*, 293.

<sup>62</sup> *Life* (July 6, 1953), 40-42.

Braves games had begun a precipitous drop after the 1959 season, even though the team remained competitive and never posted a losing record either at home or for an entire season.

The Braves only played thirteen seasons in Milwaukee, their departure almost as sudden as their arrival. According to Glen Gendzel, the Braves were lured to Atlanta because by the mid 1960s American urban centers had become entangled in what he calls the “*sport of competitive boosterism*” (original emphasis).<sup>63</sup> Gendzel is here referencing the idea about professional sports that over time they have become “more” business, and “less” sport, echoing Goodwin’s idea that business began an “intrusion” into the national pastime.<sup>64</sup> Again, this is a distortion of reality as professional sports have, since they became professional, been simultaneously business and sport. If a person identifies themselves as both Jewish and Democrat, but as they age begins to forego synagogue on Saturdays to participate in campaign work for a local Democratic elected official, it does not actually make that person any “less Jewish” or “more Democratic.” Instead, they have simply reorganized the priority and outward expression of their personal identity to reflect a hierarchy of values that has changed. While this may seem like so much semantics, the distinction is crucial when applied historically because the idea that something or someone can become “more” of one part of their identity while becoming “less” of another part introduces an immediate bias of influence. Rather, a person or institution or community’s identity makeup is simultaneous; the example above is always both Jewish and Democratic in the same way that professional sports are always both sport and business. Moreover, the history of team relocation supports this interpretation,

<sup>63</sup> Glen Gendzel, “Competitive Boosterism: How Milwaukee Lost the Braves,” *The Business History Review* 69 no. 4, (Winter 1995), 531

<sup>64</sup> Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year*, 223.

albeit in a rather paradoxical manner. If, in fact, business had become the preeminent driving force of professional sports, pushing out psychological and unquantifiable benefits, then it could have been expected that cities across the board would have balked at the idea of paying to construct teams' stadiums for them while handing over most of the supplemental revenue streams generated by the parks as well. Such an arrangement – which is of course the exact one that most teams and cities enter into today – would have been good business for the teams but a remarkably poor investment for the cities. Instead, cities routinely cave in to the strong-arming of the teams, building newer and more modern stadiums for franchises that have steadily increased in value over the last sixty-five years.<sup>65</sup> The competitive boosterism that Gendzel cites is then analogous to Melville's achievement orientation, but instead of being localized and dealing with a team's on-field performance it deals with the national success of cities in acquiring and retaining teams.

The departure of the Braves after the 1965 season was made even more untenable by the circumstances surrounding the team's ownership. Perini had managed to be profitable every season until 1962, but after posting his first season of financial losses he sold the team to a group of investors that would become known as the "Rover Boys." Not only did these investors hail from Chicago, the city with whom Milwaukee had been overjoyed to compete against, but they wasted no time in making overtures to Atlanta in hopes of relocating the team there. Gendzel speculates that, "what must have prodded the Rover Boys to seek greener pastures was the \$3 million short-term loan they obtained to buy the Braves in 1962. Interest expense was considerable, with a \$2 million balloon

<sup>65</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 68.

payment due in 1968. Rather than spend more money to revive attendance, the Rover Boys sought a quick fix.”<sup>66</sup> In the ensuing court battle to keep the Braves in Milwaukee, the irony appears to have been lost on the city that the methods through which they acquired their team and the massive early successes of that team would provide the blueprint for other cities to make relocation a very attractive option for franchises. In 1966 Atlanta completed its play for the Braves. After thirteen years of ebullience, Milwaukee was “Major League” no more.

In 1957 the Dodgers and Walter O’Malley had unwittingly provided the professional sports world with a new approach to economic security. Unlike the Braves, Browns, and Athletics, the Dodgers were not financially destitute, nor were they like the Browns or A’s in their possession a long-term abysmal performance record. Instead, O’Malley was attempting to head off any chance of either of these things happening. He understood that the increase in popularity of the automobile and the increasing suburbanization of the country meant that the parks, built in the flurry of construction in the 1910s and 1920s which were centrally located to provided access for mass transit and pedestrians, would no longer effectively serve the needs of the new metropolises. This understanding also implied a shift in revenue streams, the tectonic plates of the professional sports world. Through the 1950s and into the 1960s, gate receipts were still the largest revenue producers, but as will be discussed in the following chapter, this would not hold for long. Neil Sullivan argues in *The Dodgers Move West* that O’Malley’s decision to relocate the Dodgers was actually more of a gamble than one might think. This directly contradicts the Braves’ experience, obviously, although when

<sup>66</sup> Gendzel, “Competitive Boosterism,” 541.

discussing the move of the Dodgers (and Giants) one must include the increased travel requirements. Yet still, Lou Perini was able to move a team that Boston had essentially given up on into a city waiting with open arms, generate profit almost entirely on fan interest alone for the first decade, sell the team for a then-record high price, and do it all without the complications of financing a stadium.<sup>67</sup>

This small sample of exceptional success created confirmation bias towards the financial possibilities for owners who sought to relocate their teams. As Jules Tygiel notes, Baltimore received the Orioles in 1954 with spirits equally as high as those with which Milwaukee had received the Braves. The Orioles' new park, Memorial Stadium, had cost only \$2.5 million to construct, but in the long run that was likely a fortunate price. Unlike the Braves, the Orioles on-field performance remained woeful (perhaps the only throwback to their Browns days). The team finished 57 games out of first place in their first year in Baltimore, and where Milwaukee attendance had actually increased mid-summer as fans realized they had a contender in their midst, the crowds at Memorial Stadium dropped off sharply after having caused the "most glorious traffic jam" in the city's history.<sup>68</sup>

Yet relocation, even in the face of possibly abysmal performance, proved the most prudent approach to the woes of clubs that shared a city. In fact, relocation became such an attractive option that Major League Baseball began to alter some of its policies to allow owners a bit more freedom of movement. In 1953, MLB voted to relax the requirement of a unanimous vote in order to relocate, moving the vote down to a three-

<sup>67</sup> Gendzel, "Competitive Boostersim", 539, notes that Perini had accrued \$7.5 million in profits between 1953 and 1962 and then managed to sell the team for \$6.2 million. Tygiel, *Past Time*, 172, quotes the construction cost of County Stadium to be \$4 million.

<sup>68</sup> Tygiel, *Past Time*, pp. 175-176.

fourths assent by the league containing the moving team and no vote in the other league. Thus the required number of assenting votes was reduced from sixteen to six.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, the commissioner's office outlined a set of guidelines whereby a team could "qualify" for relocation: "The franchise has to have a history of substantial losses over a long period. The stadium has to be substandard, with no prospects of refurbishment. The city has to have taken some steps to indicate it is not interested in baseball and is no longer going to be supportive. And there has to be some sense that staying with the community and trying to rebuild the franchise would be ultimately futile."<sup>70</sup> Obviously, these criteria remain open to wide interpretation. The designation of "losses" must mean financial losses; otherwise teams like the Pirates and Royals would have been relocated years ago for their inability to crest a .500 winning percentage with any regularity. The requirement that the stadium be "substandard, with no prospects of refurbishment" is perhaps the grayest of these interpretive areas, as there is no body or commission, independent or otherwise, that sets a standard for the stadiums to be below. The standard is probably best described as the answer to the question "Do most teams have a stadium that is nicer or newer than ours?" Contemporary concern focuses on the number of luxury box suites a stadium can sell as a major signifier – at least to franchise owners – of how high quality a stadium is, and baseball also concerns itself with the number of "club seats" each stadium can offer. Club seats often come with amenities like oversized padded chairs, are almost always located directly behind home plate and in the surrounding foul territory, and have even begun to include access to things like free unlimited beverages and access to unlimited, sometimes five-star, catering. In a famous

<sup>69</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 125.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

example of what could be called over-accommodation, new Yankee Stadium offered all of these amenities and more to those who purchased tickets for the seats right behind home plate, resulting in fans who simply stayed in the club room inside the stadium while the game was being played, watching on the big screen while enjoying the unlimited food and drink.<sup>71</sup> This resulted in viewers accusing the Yankees of being unable to sell out their brand new stadium, as game feeds frequently made the seats directly behind home plate appear empty. A cynic might then interpret the “substandard” aspect of the relocation condition to mean “lacking enough amenities to effectively distract fans from desiring to watch the game from their actual paid admission seat.” And such a cynic might not be especially wrong.

Furthermore, the final two qualifications provided by the commissioner’s office could be interpreted as MLB actually laying the groundwork for teams to hold their host cities hostage for new stadiums. In stating for one of the requirements that a city “has to have taken some steps to indicate it is not interested in baseball and is no longer going to be supportive” the commissioner effectively isolated a city’s stance to all but one quadrant of the Punnett Square of possibilities if it wished to prevent relocation. Showing both interest and support would seem to garner a full cooperative effort by MLB and the franchise to make sure the team remains in its current city. The idea that a community would show no support or interest seems counterintuitive given the vicious debates around acquiring and keeping teams, but if it did occur it seems only natural to let a team leave in that situation. I am unsure of when a city would ever be supportive (as in financially) yet have no interest in keeping a team, but what about a city that

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<sup>71</sup> In fairness to those customers, many of them paid well over \$2,500 dollars per seat, so it’s tough to judge them too harshly for stuffing their faces when unlimited filet mignon is on the menu.

desperately wishes to keep its team, but finds the financial demands for stadium construction untenable? This is, in essence, the hostage situation that Zimbalist writes about, and which MLB seems to have little interest in interrupting.

Even if baseball provided a type of tacit support for its franchises holding cities hostage to get new stadiums, the cities did not just roll over and pay to keep teams once the first three had relocated and a more sustainable market saturation level was achieved.<sup>72</sup> When the discussion of a new park for the Phillies began in the late 1950s, the city of Philadelphia had a unique response. “As late as 1959 Jim Tate, then city council president, announced that although he ‘desperately’ wanted the Phillies to stay in Philadelphia, he could not recommend public financing of a ball park.”<sup>73</sup> Even before councilman Tate’s comments, Philadelphia Mayor Joseph Clark, Jr. had commented on the idea of the city funding a new stadium, saying that, “he personally rooted for the Phillies and that he was ‘no socialist’ – government would not subsidize sports.”<sup>74</sup> Too often, historians of baseball engage the game on its mythmaking level, delving into the “real” world only when unsavory economic intrusions interrupt the national pastime. The reality of baseball’s history is that the sport has thrived in spite of its national home being “at war” in some form or another for most of its existence. While the Cold War did not disrupt play nearly as much as either of the World Wars, it is entirely possible that it had unseen effects off the field that influenced the outcomes of local debates, as appears was the case in Philadelphia. Milwaukee, a known left-leaning city with a history of socialist mayors, may have been the perfect incubator for public funding for stadiums, even if the long-term result turned out to be a capitalist approach of investment, asset appreciation,

<sup>72</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Kuklick, *To Every Thing a Season*, 136.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.



and sale for profit. The influence of Cold War ideology on the game, and on American professional sports in general, has not, to my knowledge, been studied in any full-length approach. The likely reason for this, however, is a lack of explicit evidence like the quote from Mayor Clark that engages directly with the anti-communist sentiment during the Cold War. At minimum, historians should work to be more attentive to contextualizing professional sports in reality and not allowing them to exist only in worlds of escapism and nostalgia. Ideally, policymakers will wise up and do the same.

Milwaukee's contribution to the hostage paradigm was not as direct as Brooklyn's. Partly this was because Milwaukee was never really given the chance to keep the Braves from moving. William Bartholomay, head of the infamous Rover Boys, had insisted to the Milwaukee press that his group had no intentions of relocating the Braves while simultaneously traveling to Atlanta to cement a deal with the city's mayor, Ivan Allen. When Bartholomay's duplicity was revealed, both the city and the state took the Braves and baseball to court - there had been no threats of moving unless a new park was built, there had been no hostage situation. Ironically, it was a set of policy changes that the commissioner may have considered above standard that began Milwaukee's undoing: "The team converted general admission seats into higher-priced reserve seats and, perhaps more offensive to Milwaukeeans, barred fans from bringing their own beer into the ballpark."<sup>75</sup> Jules Tygiel posits that these policy changes were the result of the Braves continually declining attendance, and while it is certainly credible that increased prices for both tickets and concessions would have some impact on attendance, it is too much to argue that these changes could result in attendance figures halving between 1960

<sup>75</sup> Tygiel, *Past Time*, 189.

and 1962. Whatever the reason, though, the decline was what eventually led Perini to sell the team to the Rover Boys who moved them to Atlanta.

The construction of County Stadium, and its effectiveness in securing the acquisition of a major league team, is perhaps the most important and direct economic legacy of Milwaukee in professional sports. Cities all over the nation initiated plans to construct a stadium with public funds in order to lure other teams. In Baltimore, Kansas City, Atlanta, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Oakland, the stadiums were built and, as in Milwaukee, teams appeared via relocation. The ease with which these cities acquired teams combined with the profitability of relocation for ownership groups to create an unstable geography of professional baseball. By selling the Braves at the first sign of trouble, Perini had inadvertently provided a blueprint for investors to make exorbitant sums of money in a moderate period of time with more control than the stock market offered. The process was simple: buy a team, relocate that team to a city either already equipped with a park or exceptionally willing to provide one, ride the team's instant popularity to yearly profit, and then sell the team for more than it was bought for before the profits dry up.

Brooklyn had shown to league owners that cities were vulnerable to the threat of relocation regardless of a team's finances or on field performance. By never receiving that threat, Milwaukee was forced to fight in the courts to keep its team. The result there illustrated that baseball's antitrust exemption was more powerful than state litigation. When considered in combination, it is easy to see how teams were able to leverage cities into the hostage situations. Should a city choose to call its team's bluff, there were plenty of waiting suitors happy to provide a brand new stadium in which to play. Should the

city attempt legal recourse to prevent relocation, baseball still held the antitrust exemption trump card. Caught between two unsavory choices, cities in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century began to concede to teams' demands, passing bills, sometimes over loud local protest, that would fund the new stadium and keep the city's "Major League" status. Ironically, Milwaukee found itself in just such a fight in the early 1990s when the Brewers began to pursue a new home. The Miller Park debates were contentious, yet it appeared as though Milwaukee was on the verge of undoing the precedent they had set four decades earlier by declining a five-county tax that would help raise \$290 million in subsidy money for the construction of a new stadium. At the eleventh hour though the tax won out, although it cost State Senator George Petak, the man who cast the deciding vote, his seat in a 1996 recall election. Unlike the 1960s, Milwaukee was able to keep its team.

In addition to inadvertently institutionalizing teams' leverage in the relocation process, Milwaukee also saw its claim of an economic boon directly related to team acquisition repeated everywhere that a team relocated to. Baltimore, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco all made similar claims to such an extent that in a 1958 edition of *U.S. News and World Report* the phrase "A big league team is a financial asset to a city" was treated as dogma.<sup>76</sup> Milwaukee Mayor Henry Maier repeated the sentiment after the city took the Braves to court, arguing that the loss of the team would be a loss of \$3.5 million in added revenue for the city.<sup>77</sup> This revenue is, however, in many ways a fallacy. As Roger Noll and Andrew Zimbalist have concluded, much of the revenue thought to be produced by stadiums is actually just a shift in local spending patterns.

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

Consumers are spending their money at the park rather than inside local businesses, giving the illusion of increased spending. Tracing the path of money spent by a single consumer is difficult, but the overall conclusion can be made that most of the money flows upwards into the hierarchy of the sport, rather than back into the community. Often, once the stadium is built, it is handed over to team ownership in a deal that usually specifies a lease payment (which is often very generous) and a modest taxation on stadium operations. The impact of the latter is routinely overstated, Noll and Zimbalist conclude, because “all of the gross tax collections within a stadium cannot properly be attributed to it because some of that tax revenue would have been collected elsewhere [in the municipality] had the stadium not been built or used.”<sup>78</sup> As much psychological and social positive as the Braves provided for Milwaukee, the celebratory nature of the “new” team saw many of its more unsavory realities replicated nationwide without critical consideration. Cities wanted so desperately to have the chance to participate that they forfeited sound financial decision-making.

Although the Braves were the first of many franchises to be showered with affection by their new cities, Tygiel points out that, “Ironically, many remember the era as one of abandonment, rather than delivery.”<sup>79</sup> Dodger fans characterize the loss of their team as a sinister act of betrayal because at least three generations of Brooklynites had grown up with the Dodgers as a local fixture. Milwaukee Braves fans, on the other hand, were not provided with enough time to incorporate the ritual and pageantry of baseball in the same way they might incorporate the ritual and pageantry of religion into their daily

<sup>78</sup> Noll and Zimbalist, *Sports, Jobs, and Taxes*, 15.

<sup>79</sup> Tygiel, *Past Time*, 166.

lives. The relocation of the Braves in 1965 was absolutely an act of betrayal, one that is arguably more sinister than O'Malley's, regardless of what Dodger fans think, feel, and remember. Yet Milwaukee as a community, solidified for the first time in celebration around their new team, remembered the relocation as more a sorrowful or melancholic event than a betrayal. This, I believe, is because while Brooklynites' identity relationship with the Dodgers was more developmental and inherent, Milwaukeeans kept the Braves at arms' length when it came to identity, incorporating them in a more social and participatory setting than the deep individual relationships that Dodger fans exhibited. My grandma's stories were part of a social memory, a type of community identification that spans time and place, incorporates historical memory, but also has a strong voluntary-participatory element. Geoffrey Cubitt further explains that, "The processes of social memory are ones which are always cross-weaving the social and the individual, producing pools of retrospective knowledge and understanding that are available both for social and for personal appropriation."<sup>80</sup> When Grandma Meg actually rode the buses from Green Bay to Milwaukee to watch the Braves, she was a part of the rather literal social community of "Braves fans" (or at least "Braves spectators"). Fifty years later, as she told me stories of her trips to Milwaukee, she was tapping into those pools of retrospective knowledge as a way of explaining who she was, perhaps without even being cognizant of what she was doing. If the social memory of Brooklyn Dodger fans is a story of an identity lost, then the social memory of Milwaukee Braves fans is one of identity found – even if only for a brief portion of their history.

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<sup>80</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory. Historical Approaches Series*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press and Palgrave, 2007), 15-16.

### Chapter 3

#### Washington, D.C.: “The worst time of the year is baseball season.”

On April 17, 1953, probably the most famous event in the history of Washington, D.C.’s Griffith Stadium occurred. Mickey Mantle, superstar centerfielder for the visiting New York Yankees hit a home run that saw the ball leave his bat and travel directly into legend. Tom Deveaux writes “Mantle smashed what was possibly the longest home run ever...in the fifth inning off...new lefty Chuck Stobbs...The ball flew over the 50-foot fence at the 391-foot mark in left centerfield, and was deposited in the backyard of the house at 434 Oakdale Street.”<sup>81</sup> A local boy named Donald Dunaway then recovered the ball, and the home run became so legendary that it was the subject of an entire chapter of Jane Leavy’s history/biography of Mantle titled *The Last Boy*. It is also rather fitting that the most celebrated moment in Griffith Stadium’s history – and thus, in many ways, in the history of the Washington Senators, one of the American League’s original eight teams – was a mythic achievement performed by the opposing team. In much the same way that the Dodgers and Braves contributed to their home city’s community identity, the relationship between the Senators and Washington, D.C. was based largely on the idea that the team represented (or manifested) demographic peculiarities. Yet both the Dodgers, in their ability to symbolize the inferiority complex and struggle of Brooklyn, and the Braves, who were used to unite a partitioned Milwaukee yearning for legitimacy, represented communities whose identity was formed in part by other communities nearby. The Senators, however, had no similar history of geographic competition from

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<sup>81</sup> Tom Deveaux, *The Washington Senators, 1901-1971* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 185.

which to draw. Instead, their engagement with D.C.'s community identity was more insular.

Nestled in a southerly bend of the Potomac River, Washington, D.C. is not a large enough city to support a borough-style geographic layout like New York, thus it could not organically develop the neighborhood tensions writ large that manifested themselves in the on-field play of the New York teams. Also, while Baltimore is in closer proximity to Washington, D.C. than Chicago is to Milwaukee, similar inter-city competition was also lacking due in large part to the nation's capital having more salient concerns than competitive boosterism with a nearby metropolis. Deveaux puts it best, explaining that, "because of the large public-service base in Washington, many... fans were from other parts of America and had no emotional investment in the Senators. When they did show up, they were just as apt to root for the visiting team."<sup>82</sup> The Senators' performance and attendance record support this, illustrating a team in a city that was relatively unmoved by both success and failure.

	World Series Victories	Pennants	Last or Second-To-Last Finishes	Winning Percentage	100-Loss Seasons
Washington Senators (1943-1960)	0	0	10	.429	2
Washington Senators (1962-1971)	0	0	7	.417	4
TOTAL	0	0	17	.424	6

**Table 8: Washington Senators Achievements, 1943-1971.** (Source: Statistical Appendix and [www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com))

<sup>82</sup> Deveaux, *Washington Senators*, 260.

	Total Attendance	Average Yearly Attendance	Per Game Attendance	Average League Rank
<b>Washington Senators (1943-1960)</b>	11, 538, 047	641, 003	8, 349	6.4
<b>Washington Senators (1962-1971)</b>	7, 314, 695	664, 972	8, 284	9.1 <sup>83</sup>

**Table 9: Washington Senators Attendance, 1943-1971.** (Source: Statistical Appendix and [www.baseball-reference.com](http://www.baseball-reference.com))

The Senators' on-field performance rivaled that of the Browns and Athletics for futility. The team's last successful pennant campaign had come in 1933 and its last (and only) World Series victory was 1924. The Senators' seventeen last or second to last place finishes over a twenty-nine year span give a rate of 0.59, almost double that of the Chicago teams.<sup>84</sup> This futility is even more remarkable when one considers that there were actually *two* Washington Senators franchises. (The impact of this dual identity on the city's relationship with the team is discussed further below.) The expansion Senators managed to accrue their four 100-loss seasons in consecutive years (1961-1964), a feat matched only by the expansion Mets (1962-1965) – both teams compiling these lamentable records in their first four years of existence.

Attendance at Senators games was not much better, as the “original” Senators drew better per-game averages than only the Browns, Phillies, and, by the narrowest of margins, their expansion counterparts. Both incarnations of the Senators combined for only eight years of .500 or better baseball out of twenty-nine, and the effect of the pull of other teams is distinctly visible in two specific places. First, in 1954, the year the Browns

<sup>83</sup> The American League expanded twice over this period; once in 1961 (which the “new” Senators were a part of) and again in 1969. The 9.1 ranking is thus indicative of consistent finishes in the bottom third of attendance numbers.

<sup>84</sup> See above, page 21.



moved to Baltimore as the Orioles, attendance at Griffith Stadium dropped by over 92,00 total fans even though the Senators were only two games worse at home than they had been in 1953. This lends credence to Jules Tygiel's argument that the Orioles threatened the Senators.<sup>85</sup> Inexplicably, team owner Clark Griffith "favored the move, feeling it was vital to that club's [the Browns/Orioles'] survival."<sup>86</sup> As a result, his own club came under a more serious threat of failure and collapse with the immediate attendance hit they took.<sup>87</sup> Second, the effect of expansion teams on perennially poor draws like the Senators is evident in the attendance records of the 1969 and 1970 seasons. Both of these seasons the "new" Senators drew over 800,000 fans, outperforming their average draw by over 20 percent each year as fans came to see the American League's new teams, the Milwaukee Brewers (née Seattle Pilots) and Toronto Blue Jays. As an expansion franchise themselves in 1961 the new Senators drew just shy of 600,000 people, well below their eventual average, indicating that local residents were, in fact, "just as apt to root for the visiting team." Yet much like in Milwaukee, the newness of even these other teams wore off and after the 1971 season owner Bob Short moved the team to Texas where they became the Rangers.

Baseball, it seemed, was for Washington, D.C. more about status than about achievement. There might not be any statement about the dismal performance of the Senators that could be considered hyperbole. And yet quips about their futility seem to have been part of the surrounding community. These one-liners, however, were not as

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<sup>85</sup> Tygiel, *Past Time*, 175.

<sup>86</sup> Deveaux, *Washington Senators*, 186.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 192, explains that upon Clark Griffith's death, it was revealed that there was "barely \$25,000 in the club's account."

tongue in cheek about the team as Dodgers fans were with the infamous “Wait till next year” when talking about their “Bums,” although some quips were humorous. Author John Steinbeck joked that, “There is a federal law that forbids them to win.” Sportswriter Roger Kahn wrote that, “For the Washington Senators, the worst time of the year is baseball season.” Even President Lyndon B. Johnson would get in on the fun, professing, “We cheer for the Senators, we pray for the Senators, and we hope that the Supreme Court doesn’t declare them unconstitutional.”<sup>88</sup> Others were more direct about the team’s moribund state. In her novel *Squeeze Play*, Jane Leavy has fictional sportswriter A.B. Berkowitz explain, “Watching the Washington Senators, you forget the beauty of baseball. You forget the bare-handed grab, the elegant stretch at first, the choreography of a six-four-three double play. Watching the Washington Senators is like watching the human condition without the slapstick. It is an exercise in humility.”<sup>89</sup> Bert Sugar wrote of the team, “The Senators might have been one of baseball’s most god awful teams, a thread-bare and lackluster group of has-beens, never-wases, and names that were not even household names in their own households.”<sup>90</sup> Part of the reason the team was comprised of such men was because of the shoestring budget on which the organization ran. The Griffiths – first Clark and then later his nephew-cum-son Calvin – frequently bought players who were past their prime and cheap, while selling any prospective marquee players well before their value peaked in an attempt to keep payroll down even before free agency caused player values to skyrocket.

<sup>88</sup> David Plaut, ed., *Speaking of Baseball* (Philadelphia: The Running Press, 1993), 317.

<sup>89</sup> Jane Leavy, *Squeeze Play: A Novel*. Reprint. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003.), 119.

<sup>90</sup> Bert Randolph Sugar, *Baseballistics: The Absolutely, Positively, and Without-Question Greatest Book of Baseball Facts, Figures, and Astonishing Lists Ever Compiled* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 227.

Part of the reason for this revolving door approach to the team's roster was the fact that, "While this was still an era when major-league teams had farm clubs scattered all over the country, Washington had only three."<sup>91</sup> When a rare quality farmhand did appear, like Harmon Killebrew, he was not around long. (At least in Killebrew's case, though, this was because the entire franchise relocated after his first two full seasons in the majors.) This roster turnover didn't just result in poor on-field performance, it was also a reason why Washington never formed the community bonds with teams like those that have been discussed in Brooklyn and Milwaukee. Doris Kearns Goodwin explained the importance of consistency on linking teams with their fans thusly: "In those days before players were free agents, the starting lineups remained basically intact for years. Fans gave their loyalty to a team, knowing the players they loved would hold the same positions and, year after year, exhibit the same endearing quirks and irritating habits."<sup>92</sup> Goodwin, Rudy Marzano, even my grandma, focused their memories – and thus their identities – around certain players on the teams they followed, a luxury never really provided to Senators fans after Walter Johnson retired. This failure of consistency was only exacerbated when after the 1960 season the original Senators (the Griffith's team) moved the squad to Minneapolis/St. Paul where they became the Twins. Bob Short, the man who eventually won the expansion team rights for the "new" Senators, actually had a history with the process of professional franchise relocation. His first foray into team ownership had been with the cellar dwelling, hometown Minneapolis Lakers of the National Basketball Association in 1957 – who he promptly moved to Los Angeles in 1960 and sold for a profit. While there is no link evident in either primary or secondary

<sup>91</sup> Deveaux, *Washington Senators*, 192.

<sup>92</sup> Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year*, 18-19.

sources, it would seem that the maneuverings of the Rover Boys in Milwaukee were similar to that of Short's profitable relocation of the Lakers. Short's particular history with relocation combined with the fact that the practice seemed to be spreading was cause enough for the immediate concern that the expansion Senators might not be long for Washington either: "*Within two days of...Bob Short's purchase of the Washington Senators, a small caption appeared in the Washington Star to the effect that he was not making any promises about keeping his baseball team in Washington. (original emphasis)*"<sup>93</sup> Short's squad, inexplicably also called the Washington Senators, would perform much like their predecessors, providing fans with a continuity only of failure. It further cemented the club's relationship with the city to a point where significant attendance increases would come only when there were interesting new teams to come see.

The lack of a full-size farm system, the fluid roster construction, the lackluster attendance, problematic ownership, and the poor performance of the team itself were all contributing factors in the Senators constructing a relationship with Washington, D.C., that would allow a mammoth home run by an opposing player to become one of the home stadium's most memorable occurrences. Washington's peculiar demographics also served to solidify social divides that prevented the city from uniting around the team the way Brooklyn and Milwaukee had done. The large public service contingent in Washington had two major effects on the way the team and the city constructed their community identity. Since the majority of politicians could not, by design, hail from Washington itself, it was entirely possible that they arrived in the nation's capital with

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<sup>93</sup> Deveaux, *Washington Senators*, 239.

franchise allegiances in tow. Moreover, politicians tend to be more affluent members of society, so it was probable that, at least before the massive introduction of club seats and luxury boxes, attending a baseball game did not provide the “ostentatious display of wealth” that would have been necessary to achieve leisure class membership.<sup>94</sup> Of course this did not prevent those in the service sector from enjoying a ballgame with their family in the same way that local white- and blue-collar laborers did. What this affluent status did do, however, was insulate the public service employees from some of the basic economic changes that did affect the middle and working classes. Bob Short raised ticket prices twice above and beyond a correction for inflation between 1961 and 1969, with the result that by the last two years of the Senators’ existence they were home to the highest ticket prices in the league, despite only one winning season and a failure to ever finish less than 15.5 games out of first. The result of the final ticket price increase in 1969 was a massive drop off in attendance, averaging over 178,000 fewer fans per year in the team’s final two years in D.C. The most probable cause of this was that Short had priced out those middle and working class fans who would have willingly attended a game, even if it was to see the lowly Senators. Much as there seemed to be an invisible population threshold for supporting more than one team, there also seemed to be a price above which not even the lure of seeing former Senator Harmon Killebrew or Oakland slugger Reggie Jackson try to best Mantle’s legendary home run was worth the price.

The uniqueness of Washington’s situation, combined with the rather antagonistic practices of Bob Short, would serve to emphasize, and perhaps even strengthen, certain social divisions that were evident in the city; exactly the opposite effect on the

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<sup>94</sup> Roger Mason, *The Economics of Conspicuous Consumption: Theory and Thought since 1700* (Cheltenham, U.K. and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 1998), 53.

community that the Dodgers and Braves had on Brooklyn and Milwaukee. Like Walter O'Malley, Short was confrontational with the municipal government. Unlike O'Malley, though, Short was intentionally antagonistic toward local elected officials – and toward the populace in general – because he harbored a desire to move to a more lucrative situation. By all accounts, O'Malley would have happily remained in New York had an agreement been reached on a new stadium location that was amenable to both parties. Short “blamed the lack of support on the proximity of the Orioles, Washington’s high crime rate, and the District’s predominantly black population.”<sup>95</sup> He also began to work multiple angles, meeting secretly with league officials to plead for relocation assistance while continuing to insist that he had not purchased the team just to move them elsewhere. In an attempt to support his accusations that the city, not he or his team’s front office, was responsible for the failure to provide the Senators with a situation they could succeed in, Short also antagonized the Armory Board, which held the rights to RFK Stadium and were seeking back rent of \$160,000. As Tom Deveaux explains, the bickering got so petty – and was so public – that eventually the Washington City Council sued both parties because the city had been forced to take a loan from the U.S. Treasury to pay the bond interest for the bonds used to construct RFK in 1960.<sup>96</sup> In essence, Short had maneuvered himself into a perfect position: his host city had found retaining him undesirable and his fellow owners held enough legitimate concern of the franchise folding to let him move the team almost anywhere.

Despite the unpleasantness with which Short conducted his business, some of his concerns were legitimate. Removing the racist overtones from his explanation for why

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<sup>95</sup> Tygiel, *Past Time*, 195.

<sup>96</sup> Deveaux, *Washington Senators*, 255.

the Senators needed assistance, the reality is that the lack of attendance signaled something bigger than an off-putting owner and an uncommonly bad team. For most of baseball's existence the box office had been the primary source of revenue. Once the game's professional organization had stabilized, concessions were added with the team typically either leasing the sale space or taking a percentage of the profits. While the broadcasting of games on the radio actually helped to increase the game's popularity, television broadcasts began to severely affect attendance, especially as the postwar economic boom made consumer goods like the TV affordable for the average American. The effect at the ballpark went beyond declining attendance numbers, and the original Senators were a prime example of this: "More money was being made from concessions and from renting Griffith Stadium to the football Redskins than from actual attendance at baseball games."<sup>97</sup> Alternative, or at least supplemental, revenue streams had become a necessity for teams and advertising had become a key cog in this modified financial baseball world.

The marketability of professional teams and players was not at all new in the late 1960s. As far back as Babe Ruth, professional athletes had begun to understand that they had a commercial viability outside their on-field performance.<sup>98</sup> Local entrepreneurs had also understood that a healthy relationship with teams could be a boon for business. Brooklyn tailor (and eventual New York City Council President) Abe Stark famously adorned the wall under the Ebbets Field scoreboard with an ad that said "Hit Sign, Win Suit. Abe Stark. Brooklyn's leading clothier."<sup>99</sup> Some local business affiliations became

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>98</sup> Rader, *Baseball*, 134.

<sup>99</sup> Bob McGee, *Greatest Ballpark Ever: Ebbets Field and the Story of the Brooklyn Dodgers* (Durham: Rivergate Books, 2005), 148.; Tygiel, *Past Time*, 166.

even more intimate, such as when the Anheuser-Busch brewery bought the St. Louis Cardinals in February of 1953.<sup>100</sup> While these were solid sources of additional revenue for the teams, they were a bit beholden to geographic concerns as well, a fact that limited the financial impact that these businesses could make on the teams. After all, Abe Stark only owned one clothing store, and it wouldn't have made much sense for Anheuser-Busch to attempt to market themselves in places like Milwaukee or Pittsburgh that already had a strong local brewery tradition. The revenue that could be gained from local TV contracts, however, was astronomical in comparison because it allowed large regional businesses and national chains of all sizes to become involved. Thus the focus, at least of team ownership, shifted away from strong local allegiance and toward the profit – or at least stability – provided by regional guarantees of TV and radio money, sometimes paid in advance. Glen Gendzel argues that this is precisely what lured the Rover Boys to Atlanta with the Braves, and Deveaux echoes this sentiment in his explanation of Bob Short's desire to move the expansion Senators to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.<sup>101</sup> By enhancing the stability of their revenue streams through a reduced dependency on attendance, franchise owners like Bob Short and Bartholemey's Rover Boys ended up presenting local fans with an amazing paradox. On the one hand, the new guaranteed revenue should have solidified team finances to the point where relocation would no longer occur. And on this point things proved true; the expansion Senators were the last team to relocate when they moved to the Dallas-Fort Worth area and became the Rangers in 1972 – at least until the Expos left Montreal to return to the nation's capital as the Nationals in 2005. Expansion became the preferred route, as the league grew in 1961,

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<sup>100</sup> Tygiel, *Past Time*, 170.

<sup>101</sup> Gendzel, "Competitive Boosterism," 547; Deveaux, *Washington Senators*, 256.



1962, 1969, 1977, 1993, and 1998. But this stability did not mean that the threat of relocation actually abated. The lure of increased revenue, especially if it was advanced or guaranteed, would remain a significant and tempting force both for teams and for the cities that wished to gain them. With the newly reshaped revenue pie, both cities and teams could also focus on providing advantages in one area as a way to lure (or retain) teams. This, then, is the faux-organic process from which the hostage situation that Zimbalist writes about emerged. Cities were, for the most part fixed on their ability to allocate broadcast revenue to teams. In order to prevent their local franchise from being lured to a new home, cities would have to sweeten the pot somehow, and the answer almost always revolved around construction of a new, publicly subsidized stadium from which the team could reap untold fiscal rewards while reducing their own overhead costs. This became especially important after 1975, as the advent of free agency saw contracts skyrocket because of baseball's lack of a salary cap. Thus New York's refusal to allow O'Malley the land he desired, Milwaukee's seemingly innocuous decision to build a stadium in the hopes of acquiring a professional team, and Washington's stark illustration of the volatility and problematic nature of revenue depending upon attendance created a perfect storm from which the hostage situation cemented itself. And the paradox would prove remarkably resilient, as cities cherished their grasp of the identity of being "Major League", that arch-cachet of cityhood, while simultaneously understanding that the grip was tenuous at best.<sup>102</sup>

As I have argued, though, baseball – and sports in general – is not just economics, although it cannot escape its relationship with the economic aspects of society. There is also a social and community identity aspect, especially surrounding professional sports.

<sup>102</sup> Gendzel, "Competitive Boosterism," 532.

The nature of this relationship is best analyzed in places where the loss of a team has occurred because the discourse surrounding that event is often revealing of the way fans and locals conceptualized their relationship to the team. As discussed above, Brooklyn saw the Dodgers as a representative part of their community, nearly inseparable because achievement formed the basis of the relationship, making success all the more enjoyable. In Milwaukee, the Braves were found to be a unifying and legitimizing force. A partitioned city was unified through baseball and was willing to incorporate its larger state connections in its quest for regional legitimacy. In Washington, D.C., the relationship between the community and both incarnations of the Senators is more troubling but also, I would posit, a positive example of community of a different sort.

Using the same framing lens with which Brooklyn and Milwaukee have been treated, the community identity relationship between the Senators and Washington, D.C. seems to be exclusionary rather than inclusionary. After all, as Miranda Joseph has argued, the universality that can be implied in some community settings is often untrue and the mere “discourse of community” can “legitimate social hierarchies.”<sup>103</sup> However, this does not mean that the existence and experience of the Senators was without its contribution to a community, rather it means that the type of community that is being affected may not be as evident. When combined with the earlier discussions about the affluent public sector employees, the idea of changing revenue streams is indicative of changing patterns of consumption. As Lizabeth Cohen has argued, “Without discounting the changing nature of production in shaping the city, by focusing on it exclusively we may miss the significance of consumption trends and choices in the making of the city,

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<sup>103</sup> Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, (Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2002), viii.

and the twentieth-century city in particular.”<sup>104</sup> In other words, focusing strictly on the ways teams intended for fans to consume their products does not always consider, let alone accurately represent, consumer intentions. Part of the reason that the Senators did not have the unifying force that the Dodgers or Braves had was because the D.C. residents who attended the games were there for different reasons. The majority of Dodgers fans attended games to see their beloved Bums attempt to vanquish and outperform the rival Giants – local rivalries were played out on the field. Similarly, the majority of Braves fans attended games at County Stadium to participate in their new legitimized “Major League” identity – winning was a phenomenal bonus. But for Senators crowds, the majority of them were not there to see the home team. In Washington, D.C., demography superseded geography. In a rather fitting parallel, the community with whom the Senators engaged most were what we have come today to call the “Nation” fans (i.e. Red Sox Nation). Doris Kearns Goodwin writes of being introduced to “the invisible community of baseball” at a very young age when at a park one day she met a fellow Dodger fan who was from New Jersey.<sup>105</sup> “Invisible” is a bit problematic, as fans who literally wear their allegiances on their clothing are anything but invisible. The better term for this community, I’d argue, is decentralized. (Nationalized probably represents the modern community of sports fans better – hence Red Sox Nation and Cowboy Nation, among others – but its existence is dependent on the advent of truly nationalized personal communication in the form of the internet, cellular phones, and social media.) As the country’s population grew and dispersed to fill in new urban centers, those who had grown up rooting for one team or another had the choice of taking

<sup>104</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, “Is There An Urban History of Consumption?” *Journal of Urban History*, 29, no. 2 (2003), 87.

<sup>105</sup> Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year*, 42.

their allegiance with them, as the public sector employees of Washington, D.C. often did, or realigning themselves with their new local team, as Goodwin and her family did.<sup>106</sup> For fans, participant culture began to be just as much about whether they individually had “a” team as it was about whether there was a professional team nearby. Cohen’s emphasis on the consumption aspect of cities is reinforced then, as the changes in fans’ consumption habits mirrored the change in revenue streams for teams. As the community of fans grew to include those outside the immediate geography of the home park, the focus on achievement by fans increased. “Home,” Amy Bass argues, became “blurry...The importance of the *idea* of the local, if not its *actuality*,” was now paramount.<sup>107</sup>

Perhaps the most amazing aspect to the history of baseball in Washington, D.C., is the fact that somehow the city managed to lose *two* franchises in a decade after a lengthy and acrimonious battle between second Senators owner Bob Short and the city, endured on-field futility for the better part of three decades, and still did not draw enough ire from the men on Capitol Hill to truly threaten baseball’s antitrust exemption. As Zimbalist has argued, the antitrust exemption enjoyed by MLB is the cornerstone of their ability to replicate the hostage situation in every city with a major league team. Tom Deveaux points out that team owners were aware of the unpleasantness that accompanied

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<sup>106</sup> Goodwin, *Wait Till Next Year*, 254-255. “Nor could I have found a team more reminiscent of the Brooklyn Dodgers than my new team, the Boston Red Sox...Nor could anyone else in my family escape our shared past. Charlotte, obviously possessing a maturity and capacity for detachment far larger than my own, roots for a team called the Dodgers somewhere west of the Appalachians. Jeanne would become an acolyte of the Colorado Rockies...My father, like so may disinherited New Yorkers, turned to the New York Mets...”

<sup>107</sup> Amy Bass, “We Believe: The Anatomy of Red Sox Nation,” in Daniel A. Nathan, *Rooting for the Home Team*, 139; 141.

any relocation talks, but were especially wary of the true nature of the process when it came to relocation in Washington: “The main fear of American League owners was that the politicians might take umbrages at the displacement of this [the Senators] ballclub in particular. Many of them were already upset enough that the Dodgers and Giants had left New York. In 1958, Brooklyn Congressman Emanuel Celler introduced a bill that would bring all sports under antitrust laws.”<sup>108</sup> Celler’s bill never amounted to a serious threat to baseball’s special status. In fact, the closest that baseball would come to having its antitrust privileges revoked would be the inquiry of Senator Estes Kefauver regarding the American and National Leagues’ treatment of the upstart Continental League, which, when put to a vote in the Senate in 1960, was narrowly defeated. Where once the team owners had voted purely out self-interest and self-protection (and, occasionally in the case of preventing Bill Veeck from carrying out one of his eccentric ideas, out of distaste and spite), with the case of relocation for the new Senators they affirmed the need for swift action. Regardless of his other shortcomings, Red Sox owner Tom Yawkey held the rather patriotic view that the nation’s capital should not be without baseball. Former Red Sox hitting legend (and then-manager of the Washington Senators) Ted Williams convinced him of the need for relocation. Similarly, Charles Finley, owner of the now-Oakland Athletics, after exhausting his network of contacts for possible buyers of the team, switched his vote from abstention to assent, guaranteeing that Short would be allowed to relocate to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.<sup>109</sup>

The relocation of the expansion Senators would have two major repercussions for Washington, D.C. The first was that the city would be without professional baseball for

<sup>108</sup> Deveaux, *Washington Senators*, 203.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

thirty-three years, until the relocated Montreal Expos came to town as the Washington Nationals in 2005. The Expos were the first MLB franchise to relocate since the expansion Senators had become the Texas Rangers. Yet the league had grown three different times (1977, 1993, 1998) since the Senators had left town, even returning to Seattle in 1977, only eight years after the 1969 expansion Seattle Pilots were so poorly received that they were relocated to Milwaukee as the Brewers after only a single season. Probably, the memory of the acrimonious departure and memories of the threat that Congress posed to the exclusivity of MLB ownership was compounded by the emergence of free agency and the skyrocketing player salaries that began to take effect in the mid-1970s. The hostage approach to park construction had directly or indirectly resulted in either renovations or an entirely new ballpark over those thirty-three years for every team, so a return to Washington had to be timed and executed in such a manner as to try and limit congressional interest in anything beyond the box score. It may be a cynical interpretation, but the post-9/11 world seemed to be the perfect setting for this return. Not only was Congress busy addressing national security and a quest for retribution, but there was also relatively fresh on the minds of Americans the image of President George W. Bush throwing out the first pitch of Game 3 of the 2001 World Series in New York. The national pastime, which had lost so much ground to football over the previous three decades, was back in the spotlight and offered a relatively seamless reentry into the nation's capital.

Yet even Washington, D.C., a metropolitan area roughly the size of Boston or St. Louis, was able to minimize the effects of losing their ballclub – and thus their “Major League” status – twice. Partly, this was because professional football had made massive

gains in popularity since the advent of television, and Washington was gifted with a good team in the Redskins that had not only success but also a budding rivalry with “America’s Team,” the Dallas Cowboys. As the ties that linked the sports fan community to a team became less reliant upon geography, the symbolic value of a city having a team increased. However, growth of American professional sports was so rapid in the final quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that baseball was no longer an exclusive signifier of “Major League” status. Cities like Portland (NBA), Buffalo (NFL, NHL), and Tampa Bay (NFL) found themselves legitimized through sports other than baseball. For those cities that did retain a baseball team, however, Washington had unwittingly set the stage for a new series of stadium development projects, all which would be funded at least partly by public financing. When the city constructed District of Columbia Stadium in 1961 – later renamed Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium (RFK) – they broke conceptual ground by conceiving of the space as a multisport venue.<sup>110</sup> The result for baseball would be that the game began to be played more frequently in stadiums unaffectionately known as “concrete donuts” – Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia, Riverfront Stadium in Cincinnati, and Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh were among some of the most recognizable of these edifices. Constructed to, at least theoretically, house both professional football and professional baseball comfortably, the former sport was much more acclimated to the oval shape of the structures, which lacked the design character of a Wrigley or a Fenway and often boasted Astroturf as a playing surface. Economically, however, these venues addressed certain specifically urban problems that had resulted from the suburbanization of professional sports. Bruce Kuklick’s case study of Shibe Park in Philadelphia stands as a model for a more national urban problem of

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

neighborhood reconfiguration in the wake of suburban flight. “From the time baseball businessmen constructed their parks until the 1960s, the buildings were central to community activity in the United States. Because few large public facilities existed, entrepreneurs frequently selected baseball stadiums to house civic functions.”<sup>111</sup> Not only were baseball stadiums large public facilities, but often they were also centrally located and easily accessible to pedestrian and mass transit traffic. With the increased popularity of the automobile and the expansion to the suburbs, the neighborhoods surrounding parks deteriorated, occupied mostly by those who could not afford to relocate to the suburbs. Unfortunately, this deterioration also had a strong racial component. Falling property values made the central neighborhoods more affordable for African-American wage workers, and as more blacks moved in racial tensions at and around games escalated. Although it is Kuklick who most succinctly describes the issue as it stood in Philadelphia, he underscores the fact that the issue was prevalent in many cities that had once housed their ball clubs in the heart of downtown. “The problems of the franchise and the neighborhood were not unique. In a 1972 federal study, the director of Housing and Urban Affairs mentioned seven cities with similar miseries in the 1960s. Six of seven were homes to professional baseball; they represented eleven of the original sixteen major league teams and five abandoned parks.”<sup>112</sup> The issue of abandoned parks was easily combated, as the ground was either repossessed or sold with the park itself being razed and the land repurposed. But the lack of these central, heavily racialized neighborhoods as viable locations for new stadiums limited the number of possible locations and drove the interest in the multisport “concrete donuts.” Some newer urban

<sup>111</sup> Kuklick, *To Every Thing A Season*, 82.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.



areas, like Kansas City, avoided the multisport approach and kept their venues for baseball and football separate, and by the early 1990s the luster of efficiency was no longer enough to willingly construct these venues. Washington had led the way in multisport stadiums, but it would be neighboring Baltimore that, faced with serious economic hardship, would choose to incorporate stadium construction as part of a plan for urban economic redevelopment, despite steadily rising construction costs.<sup>113</sup>

Brooklyn and the Dodgers illustrated the startling reality that franchises could relocate at any time, regardless of financial health or on-field performance. Milwaukee (and Atlanta) and the Braves provided evidence of the profitability of relocation to a city previously without a team, not to mention one that had already built or was willing to build a stadium to accommodate a team. Washington, D.C., however, not only underscored the importance of alternative revenue streams for teams' financial stability, thus underwriting the "need" for a stadium subsidy, but it also would eventually lead to cities transforming their own ideas of how fans consumed sports. With a lack of supporting evidence – in fact with a steadily growing amount of evidence to the contrary – cities began to incorporate rhetoric of economic redevelopment and health around the construction of stadiums built with public money. Thus Zimbalist is only partly correct in describing the stadium finance debate as a hostage situation. The cities repeatedly opt in to a paradigm of understanding about stadium economics that is generally unsupportable, as well as a belief in the psychological benefits of being a "Major League" city that is not universal, but rather specific and unique to each city based on a number of factors, primary among them the demographic makeup of the city. In the end,

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<sup>113</sup> James Edward Miller, *The Baseball Business: Pursuing Pennants and Profit in Baltimore* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 300; 312.

the teams and leagues are not the only hostage takers – cities hold themselves hostage as well.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of this paper has been to illustrate the importance of non-economic influences on the way baseball as a business has interacted with cities. Specifically, I hope to have illustrated that in communities who lost a team to relocation, the memory of that team – at least as far as it is discussed in works by people who were fans of the team – reveals how each community engaged with that team as a part of its larger community identity. Each of these instances, Brooklyn, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C., revealed a unique relationship of the team to community identity that, while unlike the others in experience, all contributed to reinforce the hostage paradigm that has become ubiquitous when a professional team is in the market for a new stadium. Analysis of this common thread among cases that are so clearly different is necessary because it can better illustrate how the team's role in the formation of community identity has impacted the stadium financing process and discussion. Over time, this truth has been either obfuscated by rhetoric or simply forgotten. Much of the fear that underlies the hostage dialogue of stadium financing originates from a time when professional sports, especially baseball, were much more regionally anchored and the community identity surrounding these teams was less national. Scrutiny of this time period is therefore critical, as contemporary manifestations of community identity represent a much-changed landscape, both in the ways that fans consume professional sports and what that consumption represents in society at large. These changes also remain unacknowledged in much of the stadium financing discourse. The weight of the threats, the concerns of cities, and the rhetoric used in this discourse all are either anachronistic or economically dubious.

One major consideration that needs to be more thoroughly taken into account when discussing publicly funded stadiums is the idea that fan-decentralization has greatly affected not only the self-identification process of communities, but it has also served to mute possible opposition to stadium construction to some degree. Cultural critic and humorist Joe Queenan has written that, “Fan support must be based on one of two criteria. Either you grew up in a specific locality and inherited a congenital municipal connection to the team, or you grew up somewhere else but rooted for your father’s team.”<sup>114</sup> Humor aside, the conditions that Queenan mentions do reflect reality to a large degree. Before television ownership became a nationwide standard that made it easier to follow a team from across the country, and especially before the rise of the Internet, geography was the strongest tie between fans and their teams. As Dodgers fans illustrated through their vociferous and plentiful objections to the team’s relocation, some teams could become so institutionalized within a community that to relocate them was to scar the infrastructure of that community. Specifically because of the way Brooklynites reacted to the Dodger relocation – by declaring loudly and openly to anyone that would listen that Walter O’Malley was a traitor of biblical proportions – the story that they conveyed became another example in baseball history where legend became fact. Much as Babe Ruth supposedly called his own shot in the 1932 World Series against the Cubs, every city that did not do whatever it could to retain its teams would be subject to the same humiliating betrayal by team ownership that Dodger fans suffered. In the world of non-academic publication on baseball, books on the history of the Brooklyn Dodgers are probably second in plurality to ghostwritten (auto)biographies. In the last five years

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<sup>114</sup> Joe Queenan, *True Believers: The Tragic Inner Life of Sports Fans* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2003), 71.

alone, two new biographies of O'Malley have emerged.<sup>115</sup> Yet like the legend of Ruth's called shot, the story of doom and gloom for cities that lost or lose teams was apocryphal. The Brooklyn experience was not normative, but unique. In hindsight, this should have been obvious to contemporaries, as the amount of ink directed venomously at Horace Stoneham and the Giants is far less than what O'Malley suffered. If a sister borough did not even react as strongly as Brooklyn did then it stands to reason that Brooklyn's reaction was in fact a product of that borough's idiosyncrasies. As I argued above, the relocation of the Braves from Milwaukee to Atlanta is a more definite betrayal than what O'Malley had done. However, because of the limited exposure to professional baseball in Milwaukee there was not enough time to develop the same institutionalized relationship that would result in a reaction of the same magnitude as what occurred in Brooklyn. Moreover, Milwaukee used the Braves as a unifying aspect of their community identity. Not only did it help merge disparate neighborhoods within the city, but it also included people from all over Wisconsin, like my grandma. This inclusionary reality, as opposed to Brooklyn's insular disposition concerning their team, showed that geography still greatly influenced ideas of community identity, but the dense and centralized nature of the team (and even the ballpark itself) was not as crucial. Washington D.C., then, is the ultimate contrast to Brooklyn, as the relationship between the city and the team was still based on those residents that lived in the metropolitan area, but the Senators were not a strongly supported or projected part of D.C.'s identity. Rather, they became a utility for different segments of the population; the affluent public

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<sup>115</sup> Michael D'Antonio, *Forever Blue: The True Story of Walter O'Malley, Baseball's Most Controversial Owner, and the Dodgers of Brooklyn and Los Angeles* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009) and Andy McCue, *Mover and Shaker: Walter O'Malley, the Dodgers, and Baseball's Westward Expansion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

service sector especially using attendance at the game either as a status symbol or to reconnect with the team of their youth when it came to town. Washington's two instances of relocation are instructive in understanding how the idea of the team "nation" was built. Able to maintain connection to teams all across the country, fans became less connected to the community of their immediate *location* and more connected to the "invisible" community of *baseball*. Through the advent and expansion of television (both cable and satellite), the internet, smart phones, tablets, and especially through targeted products like MLB.tv, the main consumer of professional baseball has been offered a myriad of recourse options should they become separated in some way from their favorite team or if they grew up a fan of a team other than the regional options. Because of the deliverability of the product, the local fan voice does not stand in united opposition to the hostage tactics of team ownership that could be expected were Brooklyn's case really an example of the psychological effects of team relocation. It is probably too sinister, and quite frankly probably too much of an overestimation of MLB's business acumen and foresight, to suggest that the ability to "plug in" to your respective team's "nation" at will is a way to reduce opposition to public financing of stadiums. The fact remains, though, that the resulting situation benefits team ownership greatly and owners as a whole likely have little desire to change this process.

The decentralization, or nationalization, of sports' main consumer is not the only consideration that should be derived from these case studies. The uncomfortable fact for urban residents is that cities have themselves greatly contributed to their own hostage situation. To begin with, they remain unfazed by the plethora of articles and monographs by economists like Zimbalist, Roger Noll, Arthur Johnson, and Martin Greenberg, all of

whom find the claims that stadiums are lightning rods for economic growth and expansion to be at least dubious if not entirely false.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, each city that has called ownership's bluff, as New York did concerning the Dodgers, has lost their team. This has been routinely interpreted to be an indisputable law of professional sports, even though it has not happened in professional baseball since the Dodgers. Nate Silver would argue that just because this observable phenomenon is the only outcome that has happened, it does not mean that it is the only *possible* outcome.<sup>117</sup> Yet city after city has equated the construction of a new stadium with the panacea to prevent relocation even though that too has evidence (in Milwaukee and Washington, D.C.) that points to the contrary. The ascent of professional football in the 1960s and 1970s actually provided the first possible change in the paradigm as multisport venues were constructed out of a desire for efficiency as well as a desire to prevent the pockets of urban deterioration that had accompanied almost all the stadiums built in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The aesthetics of places like Riverfront Stadium and RFK were, however, in a word, horrible. A desire for efficiency had superseded any identifying local character that the old stadiums had. In a move that will probably be understood by future generations to be the most self-defeating decision in the stadium subsidy debates, cities like Baltimore, San Francisco, and most recently Miami, incorporated the construction of new stadiums into larger urban revitalization and redevelopment projects. By reconceptualizing the

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<sup>116</sup> Martin J. Greenberg, *The Stadium Game*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000) is an outstanding and thorough sport-by-sport and team-by-team breakdown of revenues, expenditures, and contracts for the four major North American professional sports leagues. The most recent edition is over a decade old, though, so an update that includes more about new revenue sources like on-demand internet applications (i.e. MLB.tv) and the massive financial influence of RSNs would be a welcome volume.

<sup>117</sup> Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail – but Some Don't*. (New York: Penguin, 2012). See especially Chapter 5, "Desperately Seeking Signal," 142-175.

economic role of sports teams in the local economy – while still failing to heed the evidence of their limited positive impact – cities reoriented the paradigm in favor of the teams and leagues. Surely places like Oriole Park at Camden Yards and AT&T Park in San Francisco’s South of Market neighborhood can serve as tourist attractions to supplement local attendance, especially by drawing in tourists from the various team “nations,” but the economic efficacy of this approach is uncertain, especially since tourism alone does not fill a ballpark. After all, revenue streams were already reducing the critical nature of attendance when the expansion Senators left Washington, D.C. in 1972. Building parks that a quarter century later cost an order of magnitude more as part of a supposed revitalization project for a city is rife with problematic logic. But this serves to underscore the power of the psychological benefits that Zimbalist and the others do not take into consideration. In the face of increasing evidence of ballparks as ineffectual (at best) economic investments, when threatened with the loss of a professional team cities still repeatedly choose to find a way to finance the new structure and then effectively hand it over to the team in question which is able to profit handsomely from its new home. Call it boosterism, call it civic pride, call it fanaticism, the name is inconsequential: cities routinely decide that sunk-cost stadiums are a fair price to keep their team and the tag of “Major League.”

Finally, then, there is the question of whether or not remedies rooted purely in microeconomic theory like those proposed by Zimbalist can be effectively applied to a hostage paradigm constructed and reinforced by both economic and psychological considerations. In *Baseball and Billions*, Zimbalist suggests four main avenues of remedy to minimize the economic inequalities that are present in the game: regulation by



an outside entity, dissolution of baseball's anti-trust exemption, increased revenue sharing, and lasting labor peace. That particular volume, however, is over twenty years old, and since its publication the 1994 players' strike occurred, resulting in a response by Commissioner Bud Selig that has secured labor peace through at least 2016. Moreover, MLB has addressed some of the revenue sharing issues by introducing the luxury tax in 1997 and increasing its national revenue streams, which had stagnated in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>118</sup> Yet concerns over regulation and anti-trust issues remain. In 2003's *May The Best Team Win*, Zimbalist once again calls for both of these remedies in order to address the new set of inequalities that surround the much more complicated revenue streams of 21<sup>st</sup> century baseball. Interestingly, implementation of either of these approaches leads Zimbalist to the same conclusion: a radical increase in the number of MLB teams into the neighborhood of forty or more. In the case of a regulatory commission, owners – especially those in the largest media markets – would likely back an increased number of teams so that their current contribution to revenue sharing would not dramatically increase while teams in smaller media markets would enjoy a more competitive product as the increased number of players could dilute talent enough to prevent hoarding by high-revenue clubs like the Yankees and Dodgers. Regulation, however, is unlikely because baseball has “recovered” economically. *May The Best Team Win* begins with the story of Commissioner Selig pleading with Congress for assistance because of baseball's supposedly unhealthy financials. Considering the wide berth that baseball had given Washington since the Senators had departed, Selig's move was either foolish or arrogant or both, but it was the last major dialogue concerning possible federal intervention in the economy of the game. (Congress has since spent the

<sup>118</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 177.

majority of its time with MLB agonizing over the presence of performance enhancing drugs.) Economically, baseball has bounced back again to the point that cities like Minneapolis/St. Paul, Miami, and Atlanta either have built or have agreed to build new stadiums for their teams. Moreover, the limits on profitability would prevent ownership from any voluntary construction of a regulatory commission. Similarly, owners, players, and fans alike do not hold much ire nor do they stand to benefit greatly from the dissolution of MLB's anti-trust exemption. For the owners, the exemption is part of the shield that allows them to participate in the "creative accounting" whereby they can own both a team and its affiliated RSN, charge themselves any price they wish to show their own team's games, and then claim that they suffered losses or reduced revenue, thereby minimizing their contribution to the revenue sharing pot. After free agency was awarded to Andy Messersmith in December of 1975, average player salaries have steadily risen for 40 years and top-paid players regularly compete with European soccer stars for the richest sports contracts in the world. Since the reserve clause was the main grievance of players under the yoke of baseball's exempt status, they likely have no interest in trust-busting either.<sup>119</sup> Finally, fans' likeliest gain from the removal of the exemption would be more equalized and stabilized ticket prices, a minimal gain at best considering a die hard can watch nearly every one of the 2,430 regular season games and all of the playoff series from the comfort their own home.

The one entity, however, that could benefit from the exemption's removal would be the cities. The ability to sue under antitrust law could be an initial step in protecting

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<sup>119</sup> This doesn't apply to minor league players, however, who are still held under a reserve clause and do not have the luxury of free agency. However, based on the time and money necessary to challenge the exemption from the minor leagues as well as MLB's impeccable record in the courts, the likelihood of a minor leaguer challenging the exemption is small.

cities from the hostage situation concerning relocation and park financing. However, as I have argued above cities do not always make the most economically sound and pragmatic choices. The tenor of the discourse could completely change but produce the same results as cities continue to build new parks and hand them over to teams. Moreover, providing the cities with recourse to sue could deflate the artificially high value of franchises to the point where a larger number of prospective owners could afford to purchase a team. It is uncertain how massive expansion might alter the fan experience of the game, but there are cities like San Jose, Portland, New Orleans, and Columbia, South Carolina who have expressed interest in the acquisition of an MLB team. But with a rapid, sizeable expansion comes the question as to whether or not an illogical process like the stadium-hostage situation would actually be eliminated, or if it would instead be exacerbated as more and more cities were forced to support teams. As the beginning of Chapter 1 pointed out, the ability of a metropolitan area to support a professional team seemed to be more strongly correlated with population than the team's on-field achievements. The relocation wave of the 1950s-1970s was initiated by cities like Boston, St. Louis, and Philadelphia realizing that they could support one, but not two or more teams. It stands to reason then that there exists such a threshold for the support of one team as well. If the league were to expand to forty or more teams, would one or more of the expansion teams be placed in a city that was unable to support it once the "newness" wore off? And if so, could it not be surmised that the wave of team relocations might be triggered once again, but this time with the hostage paradigm firmly in place and supported by its own precedent?

The goal of this project has been to show that the simultaneous existence of both economic and psychological concerns in the realm of sports – especially professional sports – require their simultaneous consideration. Economic decisions must sometimes find their explanation(s) in psychological motivations and vice versa. Exploring either in a compartmentalized manner can be illuminating, but is limited in its ability to provide prescriptive answers to problems that arise. Policymakers and fan bases alike would be well served to remember this going forward.

### STATISTICAL APPENDIX

Boston Braves	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	68	85	.444	6
1944	65	89	.422	6
1945	67	85	.441	6
1946	81	72	.529	4
1947	86	68	.558	3
1948	91	62	.595	1
1949	75	79	.487	4
1950	83	71	.539	4
1951	76	78	.494	4
1952	64	89	.418	7
TOTAL	756	778	.492	

St. Louis Browns	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	72	80	.484	6
1944	89	65	.570	1
1945	81	70	.539	3
1946	66	88	.439	7
1947	59	95	.376	8
1948	59	94	.394	6
1949	53	101	.360	7
1950	58	96	.369	7
1951	52	102	.338	8
1952	64	90	.412	7
1953	54	100	.350	8
TOTAL	707	981	.418	

Philadelphia Athletics	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	49	105	.318	8
1944	72	82	.468	5
1945	52	98	.347	8
1946	49	105	.318	8
1947	78	76	.506	5
1948	84	70	.545	4
1949	81	73	.526	5
1950	52	102	.338	8
1951	70	84	.455	6
1952	79	75	.513	4
1953	59	95	.383	7
1954	51	103	.331	8
TOTAL	776	1068	.420	

Chicago Cubs	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	74	79	.484	5
1944	75	79	.487	4
1945	98	56	.636	1
1946	82	71	.536	3
1947	69	85	.448	6
1948	64	90	.416	8
1949	61	93	.396	8
1950	64	89	.418	7
1951	62	92	.403	8
1952	77	77	.500	5
1953	65	89	.422	7
1954	64	90	.416	7
1955	72	81	.471	6
TOTAL	927	1071	.463	

Chicago White Sox	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	82	72	.532	4
1944	71	83	.461	7
1945	71	78	.477	6
1946	74	80	.481	5
1947	70	84	.455	6
1948	51	101	.336	8
1949	63	91	.409	6
1950	60	94	.390	6
1951	81	73	.526	4
1952	81	73	.526	3
1953	89	65	.578	3
1954	94	60	.610	3
1955	91	63	.591	3
TOTAL	978	1017	.490	

Win % of Best and Worst MLB Teams, 1943-1955	Best Team Win %	Worst Team Win%
1943	.682	.318
1944	.682	.399
1945	.636	.299
1946	.675	.318
1947	.630	.383
1948	.626	.336
1949	.630	.325
1950	.636	.338
1951	.636	.338
1952	.627	.273
1953	.682	.325
1954	.721	.331
1955	.640	.344

Boston Braves	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1943	271, 289	8	38	39
1944	208, 691	8	38	40
1945	374, 178	6	36	38
1946	969, 673	6	45	31
1947	1, 277, 361	4	50	27
1948	1, 455, 439	1	45	31
1949	1, 081, 795	6	43	34
1950	944, 391	7	46	31
1951	487, 475	8	42	35
1952	281, 278	8	31	45
TOTAL	<b>7, 351, 570</b>		414	351

St. Louis Browns	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1943	214, 392	8	44	33
1944	508, 644	6	54	23
1945	482, 986	7	47	27
1946	526, 435	8	35	41
1947	320, 474	8	29	48
1948	335, 564	8	34	42
1949	270, 936	8	36	41
1950	247, 131	8	27	47
1951	293, 790	8	24	53
1952	518, 796	8	42	35
1953	297, 238	8	23	54
TOTAL	<b>4, 016, 386</b>		395	444

Philadelphia Athletics	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1943	376, 735	6	27	51
1944	505, 322	5	39	37
1945	462, 631	8	39	35
1946	621, 793	7	31	46
1947	911, 566	6	39	38
1948	945, 076	5	36	41
1949	816, 514	6	52	25
1950	309, 805	7	29	48
1951	465, 469	7	38	41
1952	627, 100	7	45	32
1953	362, 113	7	27	50
1954	304, 666	8	29	47
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6, 708, 790</b>		<b>431</b>	<b>491</b>

Chicago Cubs	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1943	508, 247	2	36	38
1944	640, 110	2	35	42
1945	1, 036, 386	1	49	26
1946	1, 342, 970	2	44	33
1947	1, 364, 039	3	36	43
1948	1, 237, 792	5	35	42
1949	1, 143, 139	5	33	44
1950	1, 165, 944	4	35	42
1951	894, 415	6	32	45
1952	1, 024, 826	2	42	35
1953	763, 658	6	43	34
1954	748, 183	5	40	37
1955	878, 500	4	43	33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12, 748, 209</b>		<b>503</b>	<b>494</b>



Chicago White Sox	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1943	508,962	4	40	36
1944	563,539	3	41	36
1945	657,981	3	44	29
1946	983,403	6	40	38
1947	876,948	5	32	43
1948	777,844	6	27	48
1949	937,151	5	32	45
1950	781,330	5	35	42
1951	1,328,234	4	39	38
1952	1,231,675	3	44	33
1953	1,191,353	2	41	36
1954	1,231,629	3	45	32
1955	1,175,684	6	49	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,245,733</b>		<b>509</b>	<b>484</b>

Brooklyn Dodgers	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	81	72	.529	3
1944	63	91	.409	7
1945	87	67	.565	3
1946	96	60	.615	2
1947	94	60	.610	1
1948	84	70	.545	3
1949	97	57	.630	1
1950	89	65	.578	2
1951	97	60	.618	2
1952	96	57	.627	1
1953	105	49	.682	1
1954	92	62	.597	2
1955	98	55	.641	1
1956	93	61	.604	1
1957	84	70	.545	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1356</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>.587</b>	

New York Giants	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	55	98	.359	8
1944	67	87	.435	5
1945	78	74	.513	5
1946	61	93	.396	8
1947	81	73	.526	4
1948	78	76	.506	5
1949	73	81	.474	5
1950	86	68	.558	3
1951	98	59	.624	1
1952	92	62	.597	2
1953	70	84	.455	5
1954	97	57	.630	1
1955	80	74	.519	3
1956	67	87	.435	6
1957	69	85	.448	6
TOTAL	1152	1158	.498	

New York Yankees	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	98	56	.636	1
1944	83	71	.539	3
1945	81	71	.533	4
1946	87	67	.565	3
1947	97	57	.630	1
1948	94	60	.610	3
1949	97	57	.630	1
1950	98	56	.636	1
1951	98	56	.636	1
1952	95	59	.617	1
1953	99	52	.656	1
1954	103	51	.669	2
1955	96	58	.623	1
1956	97	57	.630	1
1957	98	56	.636	1
TOTAL	1421	884	.616	

<b>Brooklyn Dodgers</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>League Attendance Rank</b>	<b>Home Wins</b>	<b>Home Losses</b>
<b>1943</b>	661, 739	1	46	31
<b>1944</b>	605, 905	3	37	39
<b>1945</b>	1, 059, 220	2	58	30
<b>1946</b>	1, 796, 824	1	56	22
<b>1947</b>	1, 807, 526	1	52	25
<b>1948</b>	1, 398, 976	4	36	41
<b>1949</b>	1, 633, 747	1	48	29
<b>1950</b>	1, 185, 896	2	48	30
<b>1951</b>	1, 282, 628	1	49	29
<b>1952</b>	1, 088, 704	1	45	33
<b>1953</b>	1, 163, 419	2	60	17
<b>1954</b>	1, 020, 531	4	45	32
<b>1955</b>	1, 033, 589	2	56	21
<b>1956</b>	1, 213, 562	2	52	25
<b>1957</b>	1, 028, 258	5	43	34
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17, 980, 524</b>		<b>731</b>	<b>438</b>

<b>New York Giants</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>League Attendance Rank</b>	<b>Home Wins</b>	<b>Home Losses</b>
<b>1943</b>	466, 095	5	34	43
<b>1944</b>	674, 483	1	39	36
<b>1945</b>	1, 016, 468	3	47	30
<b>1946</b>	1, 219, 873	3	38	39
<b>1947</b>	1, 600, 793	2	45	31
<b>1948</b>	1, 459, 269	3	37	40
<b>1949</b>	1, 218, 446	4	43	34
<b>1950</b>	1, 008, 878	6	44	32
<b>1951</b>	1, 059, 539	2	50	28
<b>1952</b>	984, 840	3	50	27
<b>1953</b>	811, 518	5	38	39
<b>1954</b>	1, 155, 067	2	53	23
<b>1955</b>	824, 112	6	44	35
<b>1956</b>	629, 179	8	37	40
<b>1957</b>	653, 923	8	37	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14, 782, 613</b>		<b>636</b>	<b>517</b>

New York Yankees	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1943	618,330	1	54	23
1944	789,995	2	47	31
1945	881,845	2	48	28
1946	2,265,512	1	47	30
1947	2,178,937	1	55	22
1948	2,373,901	2	50	27
1949	2,283,676	1	54	23
1950	2,081,380	1	53	24
1951	1,950,107	1	56	22
1952	1,629,665	1	49	28
1953	1,537,811	1	50	27
1954	1,475,171	1	54	23
1955	1,490,138	1	52	25
1956	1,491,784	1	49	28
1957	1,497,134	1	48	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24,555,386</b>			

Milwaukee Braves	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1953	92	62	.597	2
1954	89	65	.578	3
1955	85	69	.552	2
1956	92	62	.597	2
1957	95	59	.617	1
1958	92	62	.597	1
1959	86	70	.551	2
1960	88	66	.571	2
1961	83	71	.539	4
1962	86	76	.531	5
1963	84	78	.519	6
1964	88	74	.543	5
1965	86	76	.531	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1146</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>.563</b>	

Milwaukee Braves	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1953	1, 826, 397	1	45	31
1954	2, 131, 388	1	43	34
1955	2, 005, 836	1	46	31
1956	2, 046, 381	1	47	29
1957	2, 215, 404	1	45	32
1958	1, 971, 101	1	48	29
1959	1, 749, 112	2	49	29
1960	1, 497, 799	4	51	26
1961	1, 101, 441	5	45	32
1962	766, 921	8	49	32
1963	773, 018	9	45	36
1964	910, 911	6	45	36
1965	555, 584	10	44	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19, 551, 243</b>		<b>602</b>	<b>414</b>

Washington Senators (1943-1960)	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1943	84	69	.549	2
1944	64	90	.416	8
1945	87	67	.565	2
1946	76	78	.494	4
1947	64	90	.416	7
1948	56	97	.366	7
1949	50	104	.325	8
1950	67	87	.435	5
1951	62	92	.403	7
1952	78	76	.506	5
1953	76	76	.500	5
1954	66	88	.429	6
1955	53	101	.344	8
1956	59	95	.383	7
1957	55	99	.357	8
1958	61	93	.396	8
1959	63	91	.409	8
1960	73	81	.474	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1194</b>	<b>1574</b>	<b>.429</b>	

Washington Senators (1961-1971)	Wins	Losses	Win Percentage	Place Finish
1961	61	100	.379	9
1962	60	101	.373	10
1963	56	106	.346	10
1964	62	100	.383	9
1965	70	92	.432	8
1966	71	88	.447	8
1967	76	85	.472	6
1968	65	96	.404	10
1969	86	76	.531	4
1970	70	90	.432	6
1971	63	96	.396	5
TOTAL	740	1030	.417	

Washington Senators (1943-1960)	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1943	574, 694	3	44	32
1944	525, 235	4	40	37
1945	652, 660	4	46	31
1946	1, 027, 216	5	38	38
1947	850, 758	7	36	41
1948	795, 254	6	29	48
1949	770, 745	7	26	51
1950	699, 697	6	35	42
1951	695, 167	6	32	44
1952	699, 457	6	42	35
1953	595, 594	6	39	36
1954	503, 542	7	37	41
1955	425, 238	8	28	49
1956	431, 647	8	32	45
1957	457, 079	8	28	49
1958	475, 288	8	33	44
1959	615, 372	8	34	43
1960	743, 404	8	32	45
TOTAL	11, 538, 047		631	751

Washington Senators (1961-1971)	Attendance	League Attendance Rank	Home Wins	Home Losses
1961	597, 287	10	33	46
1962	729, 775	8	27	53
1963	535, 604	10	31	49
1964	600, 106	10	31	50
1965	560, 083	9	36	45
1966	576, 260	10	42	36
1967	770, 868	8	40	40
1968	546, 661	10	34	47
1969	918, 106	6	47	34
1970	824, 789	8	40	41
1971	655, 156	11	35	46
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7, 314, 695</b>		<b>396</b>	<b>487</b>

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