

The Social, Cultural, and Economic Effect of the San Francisco 49ers Becoming the Santa Clara 49ers

An examination of the potential ramifications of the Nation Football League franchise's proposed relocation from San Francisco to Santa Clara: A Project Proposal

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Introduction: The Popularity and Power of “America’s Sport”

Although Baseball is typically referred to as “America’s Pastime,” Professional Football is “America’s Sport.” In 2010, 31% of the United States population that claimed to follow at least one sport identified Professional Football as their favorite, while the second most-preferred sport, Baseball, received 17% of the vote.ⁱ The National Football League (NFL) average per game attendance, approximately 67,394 people during the 2011 season, was the highest among all sports leagues worldwide. Super Bowl XLVI, occurring in February 2012, was watched by over 111.3 million people in the United States alone, enough to enshrine it as the most-watched event in United States history.ⁱⁱ The impact of the NFL is even greater, though, when examined on the local, team level – the fervor for football nation-wide pales in comparison to the association between the people of a city and its franchise. An NFL franchise, upon its inception, becomes a visceral personification of a city, operating as both a source of pride, during victories, and of shame, during defeats.

Because of this strong relationship between a franchise and its hometown, the relocation of a team can have a devastating effect on the culture of a city. For example, when the owner of the Cleveland Browns, Art Modell, announced his intention to relocate the franchise to Baltimore, MD in 1995, a *Sports Illustrated* article entitled “The Heart of a City: Battle for the Browns” recounted the manner in which the people of Cleveland “had only begun their collective impersonation of a spurned lover” in response to “Modell’s decision to forsake the city.”ⁱⁱⁱ In 2000, Modell missed the funeral of his “first friend in Cleveland” because he feared that the people of Cleveland’s intense hatred for him would result in retaliatory action were he to return.^{iv} The more time a fan base has to build, the stronger their connection with a team - a result of the outreach programs, job creation, and culture which it creates. Star athletes are idolized and revered as role models, inspiring many youth to participate in local sports. Although not free, as were the Grand Performances detailed by Marina Peterson in *Sound, Space, and the City*, the site of a stadium becomes “foremost a place where a public of the city can come together, a place for” a citizenry “to gather in order to feel like they are part of one civic body.”^v Social class is typically marked by the tiers of the stadium, the poorer further from the field, but the experience of the game can be shared by all who own a television to unite viewers in fandom.

San Francisco 49ers have retained the same team name and hometown since their formation in 1946. The name of the team itself, “the 49ers,” refers to the city’s creation: the Gold Rush of 1849 resulted in myriad of gold prospectors flooding into Northern California and populating the area now known as San Francisco. Since 1971, the team has resided in the iconic Candlestick Park, adjacent to the western shore of the San Francisco Bay. Because of the stadium’s age (built in 1958) and structural deficiencies, rehabilitating the structure was deemed too costly. After this realization, the 49ers made a decision, threatening to “forever [change] their identity, to leave “Candlestick Point and its dilapidated, wind-swept stadium,” in favor of constructing a new stadium 45 miles south in Santa Clara, CA.^{vi} Not only will the team’s identity change but, concurrently, the physical entity of Candlestick Park will be demolished alongside its legacy upon the opening of the new stadium. The purpose of this paper is to theorize the ways in which both cities, Santa Clara and San Francisco, will be changed upon the 49ers relocation. It aims to gauge the impression a team leaves on its hometown, and the different levels on which the character of the city, its citizens, and the team will be affected.

History: From the San Francisco 49ers to the Santa Clara 49ers

Whereas many San Franciscans loathe the concept of the 49ers moving to another location, many Santa Clara citizens are reluctant to become the home to a team refusing to adopt their city’s name. Many stadiums are located outside a city’s boundaries: the New York Jets and the New York Giants play in New Jersey; the Washington Redskins are located in Landover, MD; the Dallas Cowboys recently moved to from Irving, TX to Arlington, TX. Santa Clara, unlike the aforementioned cities, is the heart of the Silicon Valley, boasting a tech-savvy culture distinct from San Francisco. Coupled with the large distance between the cities, 45 miles, the move to Santa Clara has been met with uproar from fans and politicians alike. California Senator and former San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein threatened legal injunctions to block the team’s movement, stating, “When a team takes the name, and in this case the heritage, of a city it causes great consternation...You can't move to Santa Clara and call yourself the 49ers.”^{vii}

The legacy of the 49ers began in 1946, when the franchise founded by Tony Morabito as a member of the All-American Football Conference (AAFC), participating in their first playoff game during the 1949 season.^{viii} Upon the team’s inauguration, it became the first major league professional

sports franchise in the entire Bay Area. On December 10, 1949, the AAFC was absorbed by the NFL the two leagues merged. After struggling in during their first few years, the franchise went without a losing season between 1956 and 1962, participating in their first NFL playoff game during the 1957 season.^{ix}

After 1953, the NFL divided into two conferences; within each conference were a number of divisions consisting of four to five teams. In order to reach the playoffs, a team had two routes: 1) winning their division or 2) to clinch a wild card slot through obtaining one of the top two win-records among all of the non-division winning teams in their conference. The Conference's Championship game occurs between the two remaining teams after single-elimination playoff games; the winner of the Conference Championship game gains the right to play the winner of the other Conference for the NFL title. The title game became known as the Super Bowl following the 1970 American Football League(AFL)-NFL merger; the two conferences were renamed the American Football Conference (AFC), consisting of former AFL teams, and the National Football Conference (NFC), consisting of former NFL teams.

Within the conference structure, the 49ers did not win a division title until 1970, their last year in the stadium which they resided since their inception, Kezar Stadium. 1970 also marked the first year that the 49ers ascended to the NFC Championship game, eventually succumbing to the Dallas Cowboys to lose their chance at a first Super Bowl appearance.^x Without consistent winning seasons and a stadium relatively inaccessible by automobile, the 49ers's fan base consistently grew throughout the years but lacked the fervor of other franchises. The NFC Championship game appearance, though, marked a turning point for both the team and the fan base.

In 1971, the team moved into Candlestick Park, a stadium shared with Major League Baseball's San Francisco Giants. Candlestick Park was more accessible by highway, causing an influx of first-time game attendees. As the 49ers's first two seasons in the Park amounted in successive division championships, the new attendees had their first experiences with the team adorned with the glow of winning. Resultantly, the size of the fan base exploded and remained consistent despite losing seasons between 1973 and 1976. To reignite the fan base in the midst of mediocrity, the 49ers made their first big-name acquisition by trading with the Buffalo Bills for O.J. Simpson in 1976, the premier running

back of the time. Although Simpson's tenure was short-lived and failed to meet expectations, his 1979 retirement is underscored in 49ers history by the start of the Bill Walsh era.^{xi}

Bill Walsh not only permanently altered the 49ers but continues to alter the present-day NFL, with eleven current head coaches descending from Walsh's coaching tree^{xii}. Arguably the most important figure in 49ers history, Walsh was the head coach of the 49ers from 1979 to 1988, amassing three Super Bowl Victories and one Associated Press Coach of the Year Award, amounting in his enshrinement in the Professional Football Hall of Fame in 1993.^{xiii} During his tenure, Walsh fathered a new style of play, the "West Coast Offense," consisting of short, quick-release passes to advance down the field. The showpiece of this novel conception was Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Montana. In 1982, Candlestick Park hosted the NFC Championship game between the Dallas Cowboys and the 49ers; the final seconds of the game are known in NFL lore as "the Catch," considered "one of the defining moments in 49er history and one of the classic plays in NFL history."^{xiv} The parade following the 49ers's victory in the 1982 Super Bowl had an estimated 500,000 fans in attendance.^{xv}

The combination of star power and accessibility made the 49ers fan base one of the most rabid in the NFL. Young fans were able to witness, first hand, the play of four Pro Football Hall of Famers: Jerry Rice (1985-2000), Joe Montana (1979-1992), Steve Young (1987-1999), and Fred Dean (1981-1985).^{xvi} Eighteen seasons between 1979 and 2002 resulted in a playoff appearance. Montana and Rice have consistently been named the best quarterback and wide receiver respectively to ever play in the NFL.^{xvii} Furthermore, neither of their careers was significantly marred by personal issues, making them ideal role models for San Francisco youth. Rice was recognized for his charitable efforts and on-the-field accomplishments with the 1995 Bay Area Professional Athlete of the Year award; the Jerry Rice "127" Foundation mentors children in the Bay Area, simultaneously funding other initiatives like the March of Dime and Big Brother/Big Sisters.^{xviii} The team's ties to the area are further solidified through the San Francisco 49ers Foundation, founded in 1993, which aims to keep San Francisco's underserved youth "Safe, on Track, and In School" through a variety of programing.^{xix}

At present, organizations, in both Santa Clara and San Francisco, are actively fighting the team's move. Santa Clara Plays Fair fears that the city's proposed fiscal commitment to the stadium, \$850 million in Stadium Authority loans combined with a \$79 million in investment, will unfairly burden the

tax paying citizens.^{xx} 41.8% of Santa Clara County voters in a June 2010 election recorded a “no” vote on the question of leasing city property for a professional football stadium.^{xxi} A *San Francisco Chronicle* staff writer opined, “But there is more to a football team than a logo on a helmet. Professional baseball is pleasant, the NBA can be fun, but there's nothing that defines a city like an NFL team,” lamenting that losing the team would be equivalent to losing a piece of the city.^{xxii} Another *San Francisco Chronicle* staff writer continued, “many in the city feel Santa Clara would be recovering San Francisco's fumble and that this turnover would be devastating, in both financial and psychological terms.” Part of San Francisco’s prestige lies in housing an NFL franchise, validating its status as an international cultural hub. On a personal level, the team’s players become some of the most visible members of the community, overcoming cleavages caused by class, race, gender, age, political affiliation, and religion differences. The economic impact lies in the jobs the city stands to lose: the ticket checkers, stadium security, parking assistants, concession stand employees, and other employment opportunities. Upon the Santa Clara Stadium’s groundbreaking on April 19, 2012, the potential ramifications for San Francisco and for the team became great.^{xxiv}

Literature Review: How a Professional Sports Franchise Interacts with its Home City

In the article “Perceived Impacts of Sport,” Ioannis Douvis attempts to ascertain the relationship between an individual and sports franchise through a study featuring a random sample of 702 individuals residing in the Northeastern part of the United States.^{xxv} The first revelation is that a franchise has the power to influence multiple sectors of daily life, including customs, fashion, interpersonal relationships, traditions, property values and development, and language. On an economic level, a franchise generates revenues for the city through taxes, new jobs, tourism, and “the multiplier effect of spending on the community.”^{xxvi} Individuals stated that their sport franchise improved the quality of their life by creating excitement and bolstering the image of their city; the act of viewing their team increases mental well-being by acting as a “socially acceptable mechanism for creating and experiencing tension, risk and stress.”^{xxvii} For some fans, the successes and failures of a sports franchise may be an extension of self; resultantly, violent outbursts can be triggered by sport failures, providing fodder for infamous stadium brawls. A team acting as an extension of self is seen most clearly in members of a fan organization. The visibility of a sport is related to the degree of

affection for the sport, with repeated exposure leading to increased fandom. The author excludes tennis from the list of sports that can successfully facilitate “community solidarity and civic pride;” however, baseball and football possess this skill because they unite a city’s distinct ethnicities and classes in “team identification,” a feat which an elitist sport (like tennis) cannot achieve.^{xxviii} The author concludes by positing that “success in sport may ‘encourage’ fans to engage in various forms of prosocial behavior.”^{xxix}

In their multivariate analysis paper “A Winning Proposition: The Economic Impact of Successful NFL Franchises,” Michael Davis and Christian End propose that the individuals in the metropolitan area of an NFL franchise experience economic benefits in accordance with their franchise’s success rate.^{xxx} “High identifying fans” witnessing their team’s victory “reported higher personal competencies on mental, social, and motor skills than fans who witnessed their sport team being defeated,” alongside increases in self-esteem.^{xxxi} The authors posit that team success is positively correlated with increased consumption as a consequence of a more positive mood among a city’s populace. The NFL, they conclude, has the largest number of fans; ergo, an NFL franchise confers the greatest impact on a city when compared with other sports franchises. Their findings elucidate a link extending beyond merely self-professed fans of a city’s NFL franchise: persons “sharing residency” with a franchise boasting a high win percentage experience increases in real wage per capita, partially because increased happiness and self-esteem lead to increased productivity.^{xxxii} There is a positive correlation between franchise win percentage and growth rate of the local economy as well. The authors conclude that they cannot ascertain the share of positive effects conferred by each locus, conceding that the overall economic boon results from an unknown combination of a consumption effect and an increased productivity effect.^{xxxiii}

It is not merely the team that bolsters the success of its fans; rather, the fans also bolster the success of the team in a mutualistic relationship. In “Local Sports Teams and Celebration of Community: A Comparative Analysis of the Home Field Advantage,” author Mark Mizruchi avers that the collective behavior of fans in a stadium engineer a “home field” advantage: “it is the social support of the crowd which propels the home team toward greater levels of achievement” because the team’s members feel as if the pride of the community may be at stake in the event of a loss.^{xxxiv} Their

multivariate analysis revealed a positive correlation between duration of time a franchise has resided in a city and fan loyalty, and fan loyalty correlates with a greater home-field advantage. Suburban stadiums, however, yield a lesser home-field advantage than do urban stadiums. The authors conclude that “even athletic performance is to a great extent socially determined.”^{xxxv} It is illogical to deduce that a strong team tradition and home-field advantage will compensate for a lack of talent; however, the multivariate analysis illustrates that a team needs its city, and the city needs its team.

In James Scott’s book *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, he details the planned city of Brasilia, Brazil, noting that, in the unplanned city, the “public square and the crowded ‘corridor’ street had been venues of civic life in urban Brazil since colonial days.”^{xxxvi} This public space provides the forum in which social interactions take place; its flexibility in use accommodates a natural intersection of people from all the cleavages that divide a society. This increased familiarity fosters community by ignoring the power structure prevalent in other manifestations of daily life. Although the people in the streets possess distinct purposes for venturing into public space, they are united in the entirety of the animated scene that unfolds through myriad of social exchanges occurring. In a similar fashion, a football franchise unites the people of the city in a common goal: to confer pride through victory. While an individual’s game experience and association with the team varies depending on where one is watching or the duration and intensity of their fandom, every party functions as a whole. Even the power structure seemingly evolving from the one-way connection with a franchise (as a franchise, being a non-human entity, cannot “love” its fans in return) is a mirage: the team is defined by its fans, the fans are defined by the team, and both have a causal effect on the trajectory of the other. Resultantly, fans are connected to each other by the team, and the existence of the team is critical to this relationship. Just as a person cannot be berated for carrying out their daily routine in the public space, making the space amenable to an individual, a person’s decision to support a team cannot cultivate the feeling of inferiority. Rather, fans of different franchises relate through derision of a team, not of the individual.

The visibility of relationships in Scott’s public arena, though, transmits a message to overseers. In the realm of sports, this can be interpreted as the public image of the individual athlete. Adeno Addis,

in his article “Role Models and the Politics of Recognition,” dismisses the notion that professional athletes have a desirable impact on youth; conversely, elevating athletes to the level of “role model” serves as a distraction. Usage of the term “role model” in modern society is “an attempt to develop unifying and assimilative institutions in a divided society, where the example of members of one community is, for various reasons, unavailable for emulation by members of another.”^{xxxvii} He chides the conception of “role models” as fostering the stereotypical assumption of a group mentality among minorities that necessitates they be led by a figurehead; the dominant group forwards their perception of the values necessary for role models but berate role models that fail to meet their expectations. This allows the dominant group to “see themselves and their institutions as bystanders, free of blame for the unfavorable conditions of underrepresented groups.”^{xxxviii} Charles Barkley, a famous former National Basketball Association player, once harangued in reference to his unwitting ascension to the rank of role model, “Just because I dunk a basketball doesn’t mean I should raise your kids.”^{xxxix} With this statement, Addis continues that athletes are inherently bad role models as they exalt success based on natural talent instead of merit, glorify violence and combat through participating in sports, and deemphasize the necessity of accruing education and practical skills (in contrast to a doctor or teacher as a role model). Moreover, Addis notes that most professional athletes are young, “still struggling to define themselves,” and prone to destructive behavior. In concentrating on the athlete as role model, the athletes, not the forces in political power, receive the blame for societal decay, allowing for continued negligence of the problems of drug dependency, city crime rates, family breakdowns, and the overall sense of hopelessness in the inner city.

The main flaw in Addis’s logic is that he neglects to see the positive impact that professional athletes confer in terms of alleviating at least a modicum of the hopeless stemming from an individual’s perception that their socioeconomic mobility is inherently stagnated. Addis points to O.J. Simpson as an example of a “bad role model” because of his infamous trial wherein he was charged (and subsequently acquitted) with the murder of his ex-wife. O.J. only became a role model because he could “run fast,”^{xl} Addis posits, neglecting the diligence required alongside natural talent to succeed in the manner achieved by Simpson. His public blunders serve more as a cautionary tale: this is what can happen to a person despite their greatness. For every Simpson, there are many more Jerry Rice-s that enter schools,

tell children to work hard, interact with their communities, and have a wholly positive impact on youth. Addis's refusal to address this fact makes most of his argument moot.

Although the “ghetto to glory” story of black athletes is not wholly positive, sullyng the importance of education, it is far from being wholly negative as it serves as inspiration. Karen Stinson Haus and Margaret Mary Sulentic recount, in their essay “When Students Write to Athletes, Reading and Writing Increase,” that education may be reinforced through idolatry of athletes. They promote schoolchildren handwriting letters to their favorite athletes, especially for remedial students, because it causes them to practice regular written communication. Since athletes are prone to respond to fan mail via autographs or team merchandise, the reward center of a student is activated; subsequently, student's brain either founds or fortifies the link between writing and reward. Even more important is the possibility that a student will begin following their favorite athlete in the media such that the “newspaper becomes a daily or weekly activity.”^{xli} Thus, connection with a local sports figure can have a positive effect on a student's educational process, reducing the functional illiteracy rampant in many black communities.

On the contrary, David Niven notes the psychological impact that black football players have on both white and black viewers in his essay “Race, Quarterbacks, and the Media: Testing the Rush Limbaugh Hypothesis”: as the depiction of blacks in the media is usually relegated to stories on crime, “sports coverage represents an especially important outlet for news that is not inherently negative.”^{xliii} Likewise, he cites the fact that many without direct personal exposure to persons of color will formulate their opinions based on their media consumption; ergo, sports function as a counterbalance to the despondent estimate of black prosperity stereotypically featured in the media. For black youth, black athletes inspire more positive attitudes and career aspirations. The “segregationist mentality” of football refers to the tendency for certain races to be ushered into a position based on preconceived notions of black mental capacity: the quarterback, the position requiring the most cognitive prowess in football, is reserved for whites whereas black wide receivers are the norm because the position requires simply the memorization of routes. Following, the media frequently amplifies the “segregationist mentality” by characterizing play by black athletes as an outcome of “innate physical ability” in contrast to white athletes succeeding due to “hard work and cognitive ability.”^{xliiii} When Rush Limbaugh critiqued media

appraisal of black quarterback Donovan McNabb's talent as overly positive because of his race, Niven retorted by examining the media coverage of black athletes and found that their portrayal was comparable to white quarterbacks. Thus, with professional football, blacks are given fairer treatment than is found in mainstream media, functioning as a valuable tool for cultural reeducation and negating hackneyed stereotypes usually proffered.

Ernest W. Burgess, in "The Growth of the City," speaks of the socialization process undergone by an individual in an urban context: "a person is born into a family already adjusted to a social environment – in this case the modern city."^{xliv} The family, it follows, is the first socialization agent, imparting ethics and morals before a child's cognitive ability can comprehend and formulate contrasting opinions. A city is both centralized, boasting an organized commerce region, and decentralized, with a scattered array of ethnic enclaves. As an individual gains mobility, both physical and cognitive, their "social environment" may begin to deviate from the "patterns of life" of a person's "congenial social world."^{xlv} This is the point wherein athletes can have a formative effect on youth, displaying an alternative "pattern of life." Whereas it is the responsibility of the parent to guide their child in a positive manner, it is also their responsibility to filter potential role models. A child's lifelong trajectory initiates with the familial unit; if that familial unit fails, then it is the de facto duty of the rest of society to facilitate positive socialization pattern. Athletes, the media, and sports can serve this function, and it is their onus to perform a satisfactory job. Although Charles Barkley may not want to be a role model, by choosing to become a public figure, he knew that he would receive that designation – especially since his style of play was undoubtedly determined by basketball players before him, serving as models of both what to do and what to avoid. The possibility of a sports franchise to operate as a constructive force outweighs the potential consequences. It takes a village to raise a child and, indisputably, there will be debauched villagers; however, without any villagers, the child can never mature or learn to differentiate between good and bad.

Instead of focusing on the effect bequeathed by athletes, in "Athletics and the Modern Industrial State," author Joel Spring chooses to focus on the qualities of the sport itself. First, he argues that the commercialization and modernization of society fostered an overall aura of a stagnant, mechanical world for which sports was the antidote. As people employed on the assembly line found their lives

monotonous, and the industrial organization became solidified and inextricable, sport became the “cultural product” through which “satisfaction could be achieved.”^{xlvi} He postulates that, at first, sport acted as a physical release of restlessness of monotonous daily routine, giving the body a separate function than relegation to a cog in the machine. From mass participation in sport arose professional sport, transforming sport from participant-centric to spectator-centric. Accordingly, the exposure of professional sport reaffirmed participation in sport in the community level. In recognition of the “formal educational value and...legitimate educational role in public schools,” sports were integrated into the fabric of the educational experience; the notion of cooperative teamwork permitted growth of a “democratic spirit” previously asphyxiated by the rise of capitalism and, subsequently, “rugged laissez faire individualism of the frontier.”^{xlvii}

Within the framework of team sports, cooperation leads to success, teaching the valuable lesson of imputing effort for the common good instead of purely selfish interest. Spectatorship of professional sports still transmits this “democratization” of self through inspiring loyalty and engendering a “community” united by the adventure of witnessing the “good theatre” of sport. Spring champions sport as “a very conservative social force, providing a cultural antidote to the frustrations of modern living;” the isolation of the individual inherent in cramped urban space erodes when a public forum for either participation and/or observation of sport opens.^{xlviii} Spring’s only concern over-commercialization of sport wherein youth participate not for pleasure but as a future career or if the game becomes predictable to negate its escapist function. As long as competitive balance is maintained, so is the adventurous unpredictability of sport such that boredom cannot seep into its seams to result in this negative effect.

Marina Peterson pontificates, “Notions on democracy and public life associated with other times and places are manifest in the public space of the corporate plaza.”^{xlix} In relation to Spring’s hypothesis of democratization as emerging through sport, the stadium and love of a sports franchise lay the groundwork for a public forum. As the most difficult task in mobilizing a populace lies in amalgamating people in a communal space to focus on a singular objective, a franchise succeeds in this respect by cultivating a common ground to initiate the discursive process. A conversation between two fans, customarily divided by their inherent cultural differences, in a bar can easily shift in course,

developing into a dialogue about innumerable, less superficial topics. From here, particularized ideologies and philosophies can be permeated through submission of a divergent perspective with the end result comprised of a greater level of interpersonal understanding. R.D. McKenzie, in “The Ecological Approach to the Study of the Human Community,” remarks on how changing spatial relations alters the “physical basis of social relations...thereby producing social and political problems.”¹ Contrariwise, these “problems” actually empower the establishment of the marketplace of ideas, originally espoused by John Stewart Mill, necessary for democracy to exist. Merely participating in the marketplace of ideas approximates political activity by altering prevailing parameters of debate. Once altered, this behaves as a crucial impetus necessary for advancement of societal change.

Historically, football teams, imbued with a high level of prominence on the cultural stage and a racially diverse cadre of players, were a powerful stimulus for social revolution. Michael E. Lomax stresses the importance of visual integration of sports franchises and the influence that a star player has on the trajectory of its community in his essay “The African American Experience in Professional Football.” Before 1960, blacks perforated the roster of every NFL franchise. The vitality of African Americans to football success made the exclusion of black athletes a virtual impossibility were the team aiming to be successful. This increased visibility of these athletes presaged the grassroots movement, beginning in 1961, heralded by star players calling for integration outside of team composition. Threatening a boycott, many teams chose to integrate their stadiums to avoid losing their black athletes. Lomax calls African American athletes “both a reflection and extension”^{li} of debates during the Civil Rights Movement. Of course, not all black athletes chose to risk their livelihood to support the Civil Rights Movement, but the ones that did were some of the most famous and, by proxy, influential of the time, like Cleveland Browns fullback Jim Brown. Brown averred that he would not play “in Texas if for any reason I am restricted from living with my teammates,” exemplifying qualities found within black students’ sit-in movement.^{lii} A true fan of a sports franchise, when confronted with the choice of winning with an integrated team or losing with a segregated team, will choose the former and be forced to consciously acknowledge the surfeit of ability held by black persons (at the very least, in the context of sports). Without this infiltration of black athletes into the auspices of a fan’s heart and the

visualization of racial harmony on the field, it is not a far-fetched conclusion that black athletes were critical to the Civil Rights Movement success and, today, help bridge racial divides.

Prior to the Civil Rights Movement, black-white interactions were customarily unintentional, resulting from a black individual “passing” as white to successfully infiltrate the white cultural sphere. David Niven observed a similar type of “passing” in certain prominent black athletes, like the iconic Michael Jordan, that achieve “a position in the sports world and in our culture that transcends race.”^{liii} Compounded with Lomax’s analysis, black football players during the stirrings of the Civil Rights Movement occupied the domain of “passing:” they were able to breach the confines of Jim Crow segregation and act as a medium between black and white worlds. *Black Metropolis*, by Horace Cayton and Drake St. Clair, advocates the belief that passing involved merely crossing the color line, not challenging “the mores of society.”^{liv} In the book’s binary view, a black person able to pass for white will inhabit either the white or black cultural sphere, unable to flow freely between both; the only exception to this rule occurs whence the “relatively small proportion of those who can pass... ‘return to their race’ with capital and experience which allows them to become leaders.”^{lv}

The black athlete is entrenched in both the white and black worlds, though in different capacities. Within the white domain, a black athlete may be able provide a window into the societal issues stemming from omnipresent racial and socioeconomic disparities. Part of the allure of a sports franchise for the fan, in the era of Twitter and increased Athlete-Fan correspondence, is the perception that they have an intimate, personal bond with an athlete (as one would a friend) and, subsequently, provoking a heightened reaction when the athlete succeeds. Ergo, learning that their friend, the athlete, underwent difficult circumstances during childhood allows for the abstract notion of urban poverty to acquire a human face, may elicit action in the fan to improve such conditions for future generations. Alternatively, increased media presence may consequence the opposite effect in the event that an athlete perpetuates stereotypical attributes. In the United States, nevertheless, it is more important to challenge stereotypes than to curtail their reinforcement; with the constant barrage of noxious images in the mainstream news, the law of diminishing returns to scale dictates that each subsequent reinforced stereotype will result in a lesser effect than preceding reinforcements. Much of the black athlete’s influence on the black domain has been addressed in the previous discussion of role models.

Still, it should be reemphasized that socially conscious athletes that maintain a presence in their community and “return to their race” signify to besieged youth that, despite their personal triumph over adversity, they remain cognizant and are dedicated to ameliorating the perennial tribulations hovering above their community. Wealth and success, unless spread, are innocuous in the fight against societal problems – one must give back to move forward.

Methods/Objectives:

The ideal objective for this project would be to inspire the San Francisco 49ers to remain in San Francisco instead of uprooting to a more racially homogenous and upper class community. Preserving the prestige and legacy of Candlestick Park would be ideal but is a secondary objective. In the previous pages, the social power of the NFL, the storied history of the San Francisco 49ers, and the costs and benefits tendered by a sports franchise on a city were illuminated. With the city’s government already in favor of keeping the team in the city, the main obstacle would be convincing the York family, the present owners of the 49ers, to forego the personal economic gain accrued through the sweetheart deal propositioned by Santa Clara in favor of bolstering the economic and social advantages ensuing from the team remaining in San Francisco. The presented information elucidates the irreparable damage to both team and city in the event of a move.

Appealing to the Yorks’ fiscal side, a comprehensive study of the economic benefits of a San Francisco stadium could sway the family. Furthermore, collecting a random multistage sample on the household level surveying the opinions of current San Francisco residents will inevitably unearth a hefty number of 49ers fans. The survey would consist of a series of questions including, but not limited to the following: 1) are you a San Francisco 49ers fan; 2) how many games have you attended in the past five years; 3) do you own any 49ers merchandise; 4) would you continue to attend games if held in Santa Clara; 5) if you would continue to attend games, would the number increase, decrease, or remain static were the team to relocate; 6) would you continue to buy merchandise were the team to relocate; 7) would your connection to the team erode upon relocation; 8) would you support the relocated team retaining “San Francisco” in its title; 9) how long have you resided in the San Francisco metropolitan area; and 10) would you feel spurned by the York family were the franchise to relocate. From the results of this survey, the potential loss in fan-based revenue could be estimated, giving a more accurate

prognosis of the net economic effect of the team's relocation. As the 49ers are currently undergoing a resurgence of power after performing at an average to below-average level between the 2003 and 2010 seasons, the potential losses in fan revenue are amplified considering the increased ticket and merchandise sales that materialize alongside improved team performance. Additionally, appeal could also be made to the city to propose a stadium deal that, in return for public funds, would apportion a larger share of revenue to the city than the annual 8% featured in the current Santa Clara resolution.^{lvi}

Perhaps, in the same way a black athlete can act as a face of urban poverty, an agglomeration of fans describing their relationship with the team could erode the divide between owner and fanbase. A personal plea would also reflect the fanbase's discontent with the anticipated move, harkening back to the economic loss in fan revenue. Propositioning 49er legends like Rice and Montana to submit their opinions regarding the move could remind York of the team's history. Foremost, presenting data regarding the team's direct and indirect bearing on San Francisco's trajectory, through depictions of possible ramifications to the city's youth, in city growth rate, and in city identity and unity, could motivate York to recall the obligation which he knowingly inherited upon his decision to purchase a franchise so intangibly linked with its city. Neglect of this obligation could permanently tarnish York's tenure as owner, drawing parallels with the reviled Art Modell. Without fan support, a team fails at its primary purpose: to be the physical representation of its city, its populace, and its cultural identity. A team lacking fans fundamentally is devoid of purpose, making wins meaningless and athlete effort a moot point. After presented with this, York must either have an epiphany that results in a change of heart or risk forever alienating a once-ferocious fanbase.

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