

Policy Matters

A Quarterly Publication of the University of California, Riverside

EDITORS

Mindy Marks
Karthick Ramakrishnan

EDITORIAL BOARD

John Cioffi
Exequiel Ezcurra
David Fairris
Paul Green
Kevin Esterling
Linda Fernandez
Martin Johnson
Robert Ream
Ellen Reese
Sharon Walker

ADVISORY BOARD

Terry Amsler
Mark Baldassare
Stephen Cullenberg
Anil Deolalikar
Gary Dymski
Hasan Ikhrata
Andrés Jiménez
Ronald Loveridge
Lars Walton

Funding provided by the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) and the Public Policy Initiative at UC Riverside.

For more information and archives, visit <http://policymatters.ucr.edu>.

The views expressed herein are of the authors alone.

Scott Brooks

Making Basketball Work: Ensuring Success in Youth Development Programs

Executive Summary

Youth development programs (YDPs) are important policy tools for local and federal governments. Typically, sports form the centerpiece of these youth programs in inner-city poor communities. The hope is that sports participation mitigates school truancy and dropouts, juvenile violence, delinquency, and gang participation. Most studies of YDPs examine characteristics such as levels of engagement and time commitment, and simply assume that participation in “positive” activities decreases or eliminates engagement in other “negative” activities.

The benefits of Midnight Basketball leagues have recently come under scrutiny after early reports crowned them a success. Studies suggest that the success of sport-based social interventions depend on the strength of its nonsport components. These components include: the development and use of local resources to nurture cultural and social niches; the creation of synergies and status associated with the activity; and the engagement of residents from different generations. Thus, customized YDPs can indeed have noticeable impacts if they involve more than simply the primary activity.

I have coached youth basketball in Philadelphia for nearly a decade, and have spent the last two years as a basketball coach for a Riverside, California public high school. This report presents a case study on Philadelphia. Philadelphia is a good example of social organization that considers, and takes advantage of, its particular infrastructure. Basketball programs are effective because basketball matters in Philadelphia. There are plenty of adults who want to get involved and who know something about basketball. The case of Philadelphia highlights more general points and best practices for city-level YDPs. Put simply, a city or region needs to “use what it has, to get what it wants.” This means knowing itself, realizing what it is good at or can be good at, identifying resources, and finding ways to involve its residents at different levels, and in varied roles to build successful YDPs.

Scott Brooks is Assistant Professor of Sociology at UC Riverside. His research interests include urban sociology, race and ethnicity, and the sociology of sport. He is the author of Black Men Can't Shoot (University of Chicago Press, 2009). Scott can be reached by email scott.brooks@ucr.edu or by phone at (951) 827-5618.

Introduction

California has long been our nation's most populous state, leading economy, and a beacon of liberal democracy. It is known for its diversity and its acceptance/tolerance of such diversity. However, it is also home to the nation's largest prison population. Even more tragic, California has the largest juvenile prison population. Research has shown that conditions of poverty and dropping out are significantly related to juvenile incarcerations.

At the same time, research also shows that children who are involved with sports, especially at-risk students, are more likely to graduate from high school (Davalos, Chavez, and Guardiola, 1999; Mahoney and Cairns, 1997; Mahoney, 2000).¹ More qualitative and ground-level studies claim that engagement in sports creates the possibility for kids from inner-city, violent communities to develop an alternative identity that works against a "street" orientation (Brooks, 2008). These studies suggest that sports participation is a socializing institution, and that involvement in sports increases the social and personal capital of teens leading to higher levels of self-esteem, school engagement, and higher educational aspirations (Melnic and Sabo, 1992; Broh, 2002).

Programs like Midnight Basketball are an important part of legislative crime packages at the state and local level (see Hartmann and Wheelock, 2002). The premise is that sport, and basketball in particular, helps to integrate youth, especially young black males in positive ways. This premise is problematic because it misses the larger structural issues and conditions facing the inner-city poor. Even at the micro level, most programs simply roll out balls and let kids play. However, we know that activities and organizations that influence people's behavior, identities, and lives must do much more than simply "let kids play." They need central components of *institutionalization* in order to be successful.

"Total institutions" involve settings that affect how individuals meet everyday needs and life demands. These institutions socialize people, convert them, and become an integral part of their individual identities. People become employees of particular companies, members of families, groups, organizations, and communities. Socialization thus occurs as a transmission of

culture through social interaction.

Given this transmission of culture through institutions, the development and implementation of youth programs must begin with this understanding: What culture are we seeking to create, and what human resources are needed? For best results, the answers must fit within specific local contexts. The culture needs to be one that makes sense to the targeted people and that offers rewards that are valuable to the local community. Program coordinators are also most effective when they are connected to the community and hold high status. Thus, they can count on others to reinforce their efforts and support them during times of conflict. Finally, the activity itself can provide higher status to participants because of its association with high-profile residents.

In 2000, I began in-depth, participant observation in a Philadelphia basketball league. This paper is based on texts and media covering local basketball culture, and the materials gathered through my participant observation—personal interactions, observations, and experiences as well as the experiences of others as told to me in informal and formal, group and individual interviews. I coached basketball (serving as an assistant to a long-time coach) and was a staff volunteer in the league for four years. Being a coach allowed me to go into the homes of kids, ask questions about their personal stories, and develop relationships with their families. Being a staff member enabled me to engage the audiences at games and to meet the range of social participants at league play. These included college players, many of who played for colleges with elite programs.² Ultimately, I became a member of the league, an insider.

Activities and organizations that influence people's behavior, identity, and lives must do more than simply "let kids play."

Outside of the league, I went to as many basketball spaces as I could, covering the gamut from YMCA leagues for three-year-olds to college and professional games. I went to high-school

tournaments and to playgrounds, where I played with friends and strangers alike. I took in Philadelphia's basketball world. In the end, I became a part of several peoples' lives and they became a part of mine. Moreover, I had influence over, and subsequently became a part of, the social system that was a part of my study. Thus, while this report focuses primarily on a single city, the intensity and depth of the fieldwork can offer insights about how youth basketball leagues work in a particular local context. These, in turn, can provide important lessons to other cities considering Youth Development Programs (YDPs) related to basketball or other similar activities.³

The development and implementation of youth programs must begin with this understanding: What culture are we seeking to create, and what human resources do we have to make this happen? For best results this has to fit within specific local contexts.

Philadelphia

For many residents of Philadelphia, basketball is part of the city's culture and character. Philadelphian sports writers claim that the city is unique for its basketball fever. The game has something for everyone. It is played from the "cradle to grave" and is taken seriously and played rigorously at all skill levels and arenas of competition. Consider 2002, when the city hosted the National Basketball Association's All Star Game. There was a lot of local hype which peaked with the *Philadelphia Daily News* dedicating an entire edition to basketball, with the cover story, "Hoops Heaven." Below is an excerpt that describes what is meant by "cradle to grave" basketball in the city:

It is just a typical winter weekend, and your basketball plate can either be full or ridiculously full. Those are the only choices. Sixers. Drexel. LaSalle. Penn. Temple. Saint Joseph's. Villanova. Small colleges. Catholic League [high school]. Public League [high school]. Rec leagues. CYO. Girls. Boys. Men. Women. More games than you can count. More

games than you can conceivably watch. This weekend. Every weekend. It is the only place on the continent where one Division 1 [collegiate] basketball team, the Drexel Dragons, routinely walks to a road game (at Penn). It is the only big city in America where people make a decision on whether to attend a college game based not upon what teams are playing, but the venue—and if it's at the Palestra [arena], they go.

With the pro team, the Sixers, as the shimmering jewel under the brightest light; with the high schools and the playgrounds and the parish gyms and the rec centers as the institutional underpinning; with all of that, nobody else has what we have. Nobody has six Division I basketball teams so close together—ancient rivals in some cases, wary friends in others, all playing games that still matter all joining together in a revival of a tradition that was sometimes dormant but never dead.

From a little first-grader playing with a small ball to the Sixers, and with every stop in between, we have the opportunity to see as much basketball in person as anyone in the world and probably more (*Philadelphia Daily News*, 2003)."

The complete range of basketball in Philadelphia deepens the structure of youth basketball. High school athletes here, relative to players from other cities, have a great opportunity to stay at home (or close by) and play in college (Lyons, 2002; Hunt, 1996). There are over two dozen local colleges and universities with basketball teams. There is plenty of competition among schools to recruit local talent, and players compete with each other to be recognized and recruited. Often, players for high school rivals find themselves as college rivals or teammates, thus adding to the local culture and significance of the games. This maintains the industry of basketball. Leagues constantly spring up, newspapers and local periodicals cover the sport, and coaches, referees, and scouts gain employment from the demand and profit associated with local sports entertainment.

A City of Basketball Love

A city is a vast web of people that make up interdependent networks, structures and social institutions that sustain life. People construct and influence a city's social organization. Yet, cities are

not merely the people. Man-made structures and natural attributes also influence how people interact, work, and make their lives. Ideal types have been used to describe the peculiar social organizations found in cities and how their residents get along and meet the demands of life. Thus, when Saskia Sassen (1991) writes of global cities, she describes a particular social organization of people, specifically the groups or classes of people with high knowledge/expertise in finance, and the technology and infrastructure needed to sustain a global marketplace.

Consider port cities. Port cities are places on the water given to certain types of economies, transportation channels, and jobs. A city's history and the resources spawned from this history also drive a city's particular character. Consequently, a *two-way process* operates: people are influenced by structures (physical-man-made and natural-, historical, social and political) that make up a city and the city, in turn, is influenced by the people who live within its boundaries and who organize themselves in certain ways to meet their daily needs (Gans, 2002).

Philadelphia has been described as a racially segregated city, as a city with neighborhoods undergoing residential and community change, and as a city with inner-city poverty and violence (DuBois, 1899; Massey and Denton, 1993; Anderson, 1990, 1999). In popular culture, however, Philadelphia also evokes another ideal type: the "sports town" or "sports city."

Philadelphia is a basketball city because of its storied past, its multiple and interconnected levels of basketball, and its socioeconomic structure and networks. These factors work together to create a local basketball world and culture, and they influence how some people use the city's resources and carve social identities as basketball players. Thus, basketball has been a part of Philadelphia, not just as a YDP but as an integral part of the city's culture.

History and Heroes

Basketball has been played in Philadelphia since the 1890s (*Philadelphia Daily News*, 2003). The game gained quick popularity because of its simplicity. It did not require the same amount

of equipment and resources as baseball or football, which were the most popular sports at the time for average folks. Professional basketball began in Philadelphia as early as 1902 with the Philadelphia Basketball League or PBL, which was made up of 8 teams from different parts of the city. Then the Eastern Basketball League or EBL began in 1909, made up of teams from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. There were a number of Philadelphia teams in the EBL, most notably the South Philadelphia Hebrew Association stars (SPHAs) who won a number of titles (Rosin, 2003). Then, the Basketball Association of America (BAA) was created in 1946. This precursor to the NBA featured the Philadelphia Warriors and, later, the Philadelphia 76ers.

Basketball has been important to the city as a working class form of leisure and entertainment, but Philadelphia and Philadelphians have also made an impact on basketball. Eddie Gottlieb, also known as "the Mogul", had an incredible career in basketball. First as a player-manager, he organized the SPHAs at the age of 19 (Rosin, 2003; *Philadelphia Daily News*, 2003). The team won eleven championships from the late 1920s to early 1940s, dominating the Eastern and American Leagues. In 1946, Gottlieb was instrumental in establishing the Basketball Association of America. He was the owner, general manager, coach, and chief ticket seller of the Philadelphia Warriors, and his club captured the league's first championship in 1946-47.

In terms of race relations, Philadelphia was an exceptional city in that public schools were integrated relatively early (the 1950s) and blacks and whites participated in basketball activities together in some high schools (Ashe, 1988). Still, basketball followed the example of other sports in the establishment of segregated clubs, particularly for adult men. Typically, blacks played in black leagues and whites in white leagues. After a few decades, the *leagues* became integrated but *teams* were still largely racially segregated until the 1950s.

The rich history of basketball in Philadelphia produced many notable heroes. For instance, Charles "Tarzan" Cooper led the Harlem Renaissance or Rens, a negro-only team, to 88 straight wins (1932-33) and the 1939 World Professional Tourna-

ment title (Ashe, 2002). Over 11 years, “Tarzan” led the Rens to 1,303 wins in 1,506 games, mostly defeating white teams. Fittingly, the Philadelphia Warriors defeated the Harlem Rens to end their incredible 88-game-winning-streak.

Another basketball hero from Philadelphia is one of the greatest basketball players of all time: Wilt Norman Chamberlain. Chamberlain’s accomplishments include thirteen all-star selections in the professional ranks, two championships, and numerous scoring records including 100 points in a game. Wilt played for his hometown Philadelphia Warriors (1959-1962) and Philadelphia 76ers (1964-1968), winning the league championship with the 76ers in 1967 before moving to the Los Angeles Lakers and earning his second championship.

This reference to Philadelphia’s rich basketball history is not simply a nod to a cadre of people or events. Instead, for many residents, it is a resource and a foundation for the deep appreciation of basketball and basketball culture. Today, basketball in Philadelphia is socially organized and the various levels are visible and known, as young men see older persons playing at higher levels and aspire to go as far as they can. The city has a mobility track for basketball players, who can start at young ages (YMCAs start basketball programs for 3-year-olds) and play competitively into their middle age (there are leagues for 30 and 40 and over).

The Big 5

Philly boasts more than 30 college campuses within a 15-mile radius, making for a unique collegiate basketball environment. Rivalries exist at an even higher level in tournament play between five local colleges, also called the Big 5: Temple, Villanova, St. Joseph’s, Pennsylvania and LaSalle. This arrangement, established in 1955, is absent elsewhere in the country. The college teams have national reputations: *La Salle* (1954 national champions in the first nationally televised championship game); *Villanova* (1985 national champions, 2006 and 2009 Final Four); *Temple* (ranked number one nationally in 1987–88 and five Elite Eight finishes); *St. Joseph’s* (2004 undefeated conference season and Elite Eight finish); and *Penn* (25-time Ivy League champion

and 1971 Elite Eight and 1979 Final Four).⁴ All members of the Big 5 have been ranked in the top 25 of collegiate basketball programs and they share several national championships between them, multiple National Players of the Year, collegiate and professional Hall of Fame coaches and players, as well as notable moments in college basketball history.

Big 5 games are generally played in one of the oldest and most historic buildings in college basketball, the University of Pennsylvania’s Palestra.⁵ As a high-profile local tournament between local colleges and universities, the “Big 5” is comparable only perhaps to the Boston Beanpot, which features four local collegiate hockey teams. However, even though the two tournaments began in the 1950s, basketball is arguably much more an integral part of Philadelphia’s culture than hockey is to Boston’s local culture.⁶

The Big 5 is important not only for basketball, but also for the city’s revenues and social relations among its residents. Many residents in the region choose which university/college to attend based on their family’s loyalty to Big 5 schools and their teams. The rivalries created at the college level bring exposure to the city (the Big 5 is often referenced in national sports coverage when a Big 5 team is playing or when a national tournament is hosted by Philadelphia). The prominence of the tournament also helps the city to host basketball events, such as NCAA regional tournaments and national high school tournaments, in a fairly regular manner, thus ensuring even more revenues to local government and local businesses.

The Playground

On weekend mornings, younger and older men gather at various parks and playgrounds to play. There is an order based on seniority and the local norms. At some places younger players are kept out of the earliest games, they are not full fledged “regulars” and therefore have to wait their turn, after some regulars have left. The casts of players vary in skill and histories, with some former college stars and others with no known history of success or achievement. Young men typically are found at all

times of the day, regardless of whether or not they are allowed to play by older players. They practice shooting or dribbling. They watch their fathers, brothers, and other men who they seek to emulate. If they stay long enough, or show promise, someone older often “takes them on,” as it is called, as their “young bull” or young boy. Kids also begin enduring friendships with peers.

Relationships develop spontaneously between strangers, as older players or “old heads” mentor and look out for younger players, and peers. Old heads teach young bulls moves, play against them and sometimes with them, and may even give them money, food, or clothes. These relationships are maintained through consistent interaction on the playground and serve as part of the rites of passage for young men. Becoming a young bull means that one is visible, seen as a potential player. Later, as he matures, the young bull often becomes an old head to another younger player.

Peer relationships also develop on playgrounds where kids play with and against each other. Performance often determines social order, roles, and status assignment among players. Evaluations of performance are not simply a tally of wins and losses; participants and followers of the sport alike pay close attention to individual talents and achievements. Mentoring and peer relationships often carry over into more formal types of basketball play, when older men coordinate leagues and coach teams and when peers play for their schools. Playground friends will often attend the same neighborhood schools and play together, and friendship obligates support and cooperation outside of basketball.

Relationships develop spontaneously between strangers, as older players or “old heads” mentor and look out for younger players, and peers. Old heads teach young bulls moves, play against them and with them against others, and may even give them money, food, or clothes.

*Blade Rodgers & High School Ball*⁷

The Blade Rodgers Community Involvement Basketball League—where I coached—is an elite summer league. It has an enduring presence in Philadelphia and its reputation extends beyond the city. Teams come from the suburbs and other states. It organizes and manages at least five different leagues, divided by age groups, each year. Ages of participants range from eleven to college-aged young men. It is purportedly the longest-running summer league in the country,⁸ and won fame and historical significance due to the number and quality of players it has “graduated” to college and professional levels of basketball.

Blade Rodgers League is representative of how basketball is played at the collegiate and professional levels. It is a big break from street ball and how basketball is played on the playground and in other leagues. Play is more formalized, requiring a different set of skills, discipline, and understanding of the rules. Games are structured, recorded, and regulated like college and professional basketball. Audiences include peers, high school and college coaches, as well as people from different parts of the city, suburbs, and beyond. People become known by playing in Blade Rodgers. Top players can be tracked in the *Daily News*, a local paper that reports the final scores of games and the leading scorers.

The league’s mission is for kids to become successful basketball players, on and off the court. Over a forty-year span, Blade Rodgers alumni have earned more than three hundred college scholarships to play collegiate ball, and over thirty former players have played professionally.⁹ It is difficult to know whether these cases represent the exception or the rule—there is no exact count of how many kids have played in the league. Furthermore, we do not know how many players have rejected scholarships (whether they accepted others, simply went to another college without a scholarship, or did not go to college at all). What is most important, however, is that the visibility of alumni in higher levels of basketball/basketball careers acts as proof that the league is special and that career mobility is possible. Notably, a number of Blade Rodgers League alumni—white and black—are professional players, college coaches, and even NBA executives. The

league thus not only endures, but it also has a vast network that helps young men to advance to higher levels.

Blade Rodgers also takes pride in helping young men to have more opportunities for success and to become men who are good citizens. Men in the league are seen as role models, and they often act as father figures. In this way, Blade Rodgers operates as a big brother-little brother program. Older men work with young men to teach and enforce the necessary understandings of organized basketball. Kids are expected not only to learn how to play according to conventions to improve their basketball play, but to improve their personal character as well (i.e., responsibility, cooperation with others, management of anger).

The men who oversee and coordinate league activities have a history of working with young people. For instance, “Chuck” is a retired drug and gang counselor who worked for the city. A majority of the men are probation officers, including “TD,” the league’s coordinator and a former coach. These men are clear in their desire to break the cycle of young black male incarceration, drug addiction, and involvement in violence and crime. They believe that early interventions might save a few young black men—that is why their discipline extends beyond basketball. They enforce broader social conventions regarding decorum and respect for authority and teamwork. They tell players to tuck in their shirts and to be neat, to listen to their coaches, and to respect their teammates, players on other teams, and calls made by referees.

Youth play and the involvement of older men in basketball leagues thus helps to combat the urban notion of absent black men as fathers, father figures, and role models. Here, in the Blade Rodgers League, mentoring is on display as part of civic engagement and black men’s communal responsibility. Men feel that

Becoming a basketball player is a typical way for young black males to establish their masculine identity in inner-city Philadelphia

they are obligated to help younger men, to help the next generation avoid common pitfalls.

The Need for Male Role Models

In Philadelphia, basketball history and social resources heavily influence its citizens. This is particularly true for young persons, who learn to appreciate the game and strive to become basketball players. Basketball affects how individuals think about themselves and their life. Many kids desire to become basketball players, not simply in a faraway hope or dream of becoming a professional, but as a very immediate identity (Brooks, 2009). Basketball players are considered people with promise. Those Philadelphians who feel that it is a basketball city speak of how the game brings people together (based on marriages and enduring friendships, leagues, and opportunities), and what it means to be a basketball player on and off the court. Basketball is a significant part of their culture and is used as a defining characteristic. Young men garner status for being good players: they “get known.” “Getting known” simultaneously lessens the risk that young men will get involved in activities such as drug dealing and juvenile violence.

Playing basketball is racialized and socioeconomically stratified; most of the city’s great players since the 1940s have been black and poor. Becoming a basketball player is a typical way for young black males to establish their masculine identity in inner-city Philadelphia (Messner, 1989; Majors and Billson, 1992). Young boys are doing basketball and doing masculinity at the same time, imitating other males who they consider good basketball players. Many young black males living in the poor and black areas of Philadelphia learn the importance of basketball in the city. In searching for a masculine identity, they consider the amount of recognition an outstanding player gains, and try to figure out how to use basketball to establish their own identity. Their role models are most often black men from poor inner-city backgrounds; some are professional players and others are known guys around their neighborhood. Young hopefuls are inheritors of this social fact and *for them* the possibility of becoming an excel-

lent ballplayer is relatively high and carries high status. Importantly, basketball can offer social mobility and financial rewards. For many young men, basketball grants them new opportunities: admission into private and elite high schools, and colleges and universities; travel; and for a blessed few, the chance to play professionally in the United States or abroad.

The foundations of Philadelphia's basketball leagues, from the Big 5 down to the playgrounds, are its networks. These networks are made primarily of men who have largely been deemed "absent" in the lives of minority youth. Men create leagues and coach and mentor players. Fathers and older men pull together resources—typically by applying for grants from the city—and start up their own leagues. Thus, basketball is also fundamentally a way for young men to gain the attention of older men who can be fathers and father figures (Brooks, 2008).

The measureable impact of basketball in Philadelphia is seen in its culture, synergies and levels of mobility, and civic engagement. History, heroes, and the maintenance of a highly organized basketball world sustain interest and people's desire to achieve through basketball. Basketball means something here, as the culture of the game helps bestow status on participants, and people make this happen. The bundle of relationships or networks rooted in basketball are what undergird the social organization of basketball in Philadelphia. People continue to staff and create new leagues, continue to play and teach younger players, and pass on stories of heroes and hope.

Lessons Learned: What A City Can Do

Not many cities can create a basketball ecosystem on the scale and scope of Philadelphia. And yet, there are lessons from the Philadelphia case that can help inform what cities can do to build Youth Development Programs that have staying power. What are some "best practices" that cities should consider when trying to construct YDPs? My fieldwork and findings from youth basketball leagues in Philadelphia suggest the following:

1. *Conduct a resource and capital assessment.* Consider what

the area *does well* (including taking stock of existing programs and resources and considering ways to augment efforts with more people and/or resources); and what is the *local culture* (i.e., what does it appreciate, what are its values, and how can this activity/organization complement its culture).

Sports should not be the only type of YDPs. There are gender and racial gaps in sports involvement. Girls participate less than boys, and some research shows that white children participate more in sports than nonwhites (Davalos, Chavez, and Guardiola, 1999).¹⁰ A multi-faceted approach is also important because civic engagement occurs when activities fit with the goals and interests of citizens. Children are less likely to drop out of high school, use drugs, commit crimes and become incarcerated. Health and fitness outcomes improve when they are highly engaged in extracurricular, non-academic activities. Programs that include a wide range of ages, skill levels, and that are highly organized encourage multigenerational involvement and integration. Adults who grew up participating in the local culture will have some experience and knowledge in the particular activities and can serve as "natural" resources. This increases social interaction and bonds between citizens and creates an overall sense of community.

Tourism and employment might increase and new, productive citizens might be drawn in, when a city "finds itself."

2. *Find ways to promote programs and participants, both locally and nationally.* Local leaders can find ways to highlight the activity in news coverage and other types of publicity—giving it teeth, making it something locally relevant and obvious, and presenting it as a niche opportunity. Promoting carefully crafted YDPs can also enable a city to make its identity and resources known to other cities. Just as in the case of basketball in Philadelphia, tourism and employment might increase and new, productive citizens might be drawn in, when a city "finds itself."

Through YDPs, cities can also create job opportunities and mobility paths that are transparent to all potential participants. Cities also need to figure out all of the pieces and people needed to run a program. They can also use YDPs as opportunities to employ youth and populations who have difficulty gaining employment. For example, the Blade Rodgers league also serves as a training ground for referees. Some people who referee high school, college, and the pros got their start in the league under the watchful eyes of veteran referees.

3. *Create, find and take advantage of synergies between cities and programs when possible and feasible.* Local institutions like colleges and businesses should tie into the local interest through hiring and sponsoring events. There's a mutual benefit to sponsoring events and creating synergies: exposure and niche building, as well as providing resources for YDPs. Businesses and colleges invest in athletic programs, even though most lose money, because of the visibility and exposure successful sport teams bring to a university. Visibility increases applications (student and faculty/staff) and branding (the recognition and value of an institution's name). The need for job training to support YDPs can help spur the development of courses and programs in local colleges and high schools.

4. *Support programs with resources.* Successful programs have to be rewarded. However, success must be defined correctly. Only supporting popular or award-winning programs is problematic. Girls and women generally participate at lower rates due to gender socialization and sexism. Therefore, programs need to be created with girls and women in mind, understanding that encouraging participation is central and necessary for women's health, fitness, and social integration and empowerment.

Policy Beginnings

Above, I have outlined a practical guide to creating more effective YDPs at the "ground" level. However, policy occurs at higher levels and requires different thinking. It is also much easier to dream than it is to implement, especially when dealing with the layers of city, state, and federal bureaucracy. Following, I propose

a few starting points, although I understand that some modifications, enhancements, even deletions, might be necessary to create customized and successful YDPs.

Cities should offer seed money to fund *customized* programs with development plans. Community organizations, schools, and parks and recreation programs would compete for the money via proposals that include cultural research, cooperation between organizations and school levels, and preliminary cultural studies showing community support and interest. The funding would allow for local residents and groups to suggest what the local culture is and what people might be excited about and how they could become actively engaged. This will be an internal audit and assessment of the city's natural resources.

My fieldwork shows that residents and their city need to work together. Youth Development Programs are critical to addressing the needs of residents who will become a city's next landowners, workers, parents, and voters. Engagement in YDPs needs to be planned, just as housing developments and communities are planned and built.

An incentive program will encourage other organizations and institutions to get involved and foster synergies. The incentive could take many forms, including tax breaks, development money, and asset subsidies (such as reduced costs for available land and long-term leases). For example, in Riverside, CA, the University of California at Riverside has a Citrus Experiment Station (CES), which is unique and does ground-breaking research (<http://citrusvariety.ucr.edu/>). Some local high schools and middle schools could offer a little sister program where kids can visit the citrus groves and learn about agriculture, experimentation, and other science topics.

The experiment station also houses a Citrus Variety Collection with more than 1000 different citrus types. Yet, little promotion is done. CES could offer a "Citrus of the Month" program where the public would be invited to taste the different varieties.

There could be citrus festivals and contests for youth and adults, covered by the media, and other activities such as conferences that bring people to Riverside (tourists and professionals) because of its niche as a citrus town/city. Kids who participate in the citrus program would be given some special opportunity to attend the university and continue their study, creating a mobility path. This could create/reinvigorate an industry such that Riverside might produce its own brand of citrus fruits. All of this could lead to external funding from the federal government, private endowments, and increased production and jobs which could defer some of the seed money and costs after some years.

Communities with high participation and engagement can be rewarded through development planning awards. Cities have redevelopment plans. However, the process for allocating resources and programs to neighborhoods and communities is often not transparent. Thus, communities that get involved and improve their YDPs can be given priority in the city's development plan that already exists and is budgeted. A community might be able to increase or improve their sidewalks and sidewalk safety, renovate a recreational center, beautify a local park or major thoroughfare, improving their home values and neighborhood reputation.

Entire cities can also create or rediscover their strengths in sports and entertainment. For instance, boxing has some history in Riverside, CA, and has produced an Olympic gold medalist in Chris Arreola. Villegas Park in Riverside has a boxing gym and club as one of its unique features. The problem is that boxing happens largely through informal networks and arrangements and the sport is currently not very popular. Drawing attention to the sport and giving incentives to the whole community, and not just those who might participate, increases the stakes of the activity. Everyone would have an interest and reason for pushing kids to try boxing and the rewards can extend yet include the interest in boxing. For example, a park could be renovated or a mural painted providing more friendly space and beautification. At the same time, a plaque could be placed at the renovated park with an inscription honoring the community's success or the mural

might include a boxing scene.

My fieldwork shows that residents and their city need to work together. Youth Development Programs are critical to addressing the needs of youth who will become a city's next landowners, workers, parents, and voters. Engagement in YDPs needs to be planned, just as housing developments and communities are planned and built. A customized, yet multifaceted approach is worthwhile to capture the attention and interests of diverse groups living in one city. An incentive-based approach is necessary, and there could be great payoffs for a city in terms of its reputation, civic engagement, and economic growth. If a city invests in internal development, planning, cooperation, and synergies, YDPs can have a positive affect on the lives of children and adults, and can help spur and shape its future growth and identity.

Endnotes

¹ Some studies suggest these students are higher achieving to begin with (thus engagement in activities is not the force encouraging higher achievement, higher achieving kids participate in a range of activities academic and non-academic).

² Players in the college league were predominantly from Division I athletic colleges and universities, which is the highest collegiate competition level.

³ The conclusions presented here pertain to local culture and are grounded in the data gathered—they come from understandings gained and are not driven by hypotheses created before entering the field. Grounded theory is an inductive approach. Theory is driven by the data gathered not hypotheses set before the research has been done. The goal is not to test some hypotheses but to develop questions as the research unfolds and yields them. See Glaser, B and A. Strauss (1967).

⁴ Drexel University has played in the Big 5 since 1987 but is not an official member to date.

⁵ The Palestra is historic for its age, as well as for what it has hosted. Built in 1927, it has played host to "more college games, more visiting teams and more NCAA tournaments than any other facility (Hunt, 1996)." "The Palestra is to college basketball what Fenway Park and Wrigley Field are to baseball," wrote John Feinstein in his book, *A Season Inside*. "It is a place where you feel the game from the moment you step inside."

⁶ This information about Philadelphia basketball was gathered anecdotally and verified through some books about Philadelphia's basketball history. See Hunt (1996), Lyons (2002), and Philadelphia Daily News (2003).

⁷ All names of persons, places, and leagues are pseudonyms to continue the anonymity I have used throughout my research.

⁸ There is no independent way to verify this statement, which was made by a basketball historian that retired from writing for one of Philadelphia's local papers.

⁹ This information was taken from the league's website.

¹⁰ Other research shows that black kids are more likely to participate in school sports than whites (Mahoney and Cairns, 1997) or find no difference in participation rates (Eitle and Eitle, 2002; Goldsmith, 2003). Yet, we know that sports participation is heavily influenced by access, class, and culture. For instance, ice sports and aquatic sports are not readily available to poor inner-city kids. Sports are also racialized, particularly in diverse settings, as people from particular racial/ethnic groups self-select and seek opportunities in certain sports based upon famous and visible role models.

References

- Anderson, Elijah. 1990. *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1999. *The Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: Norton.
- Ashe, Arthur. 1988. *A Hard Road to Glory: Basketball*. New York: Amistad Press.
- Broh, Beckett A. 2002. "Linking Extracurricular Programming to Academic Achievement: Who Benefits and Why?" *Sociology of Education* 75: 69-91.
- Brooks, Scott N. 2008. "Fighting like a Ballplayer: Basketball as a Strategy Against Social Disorganization." In *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male*, ed. Elijah Anderson, 147-64. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Brooks, Scott N. 2009. *Black Men Can't Shoot*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Davalos, Deana B., Ernest L. Chavez, and Robert J. Guardiola. 1999. "The Effects of Extracurricular Activity, Ethnic Identification, and Perception of School on Student Dropout Rates." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 21: 61-77.
- DuBois, W.E.B. 1899. *The Philadelphia Negro*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Eitle, Tamela McNulty and David J. Eitle. 2002. "Race, Cultural Capital, and the Educational Effects of Participation in Sports." *Sociology of Education* 75:123-146.
- Gans, Herbert J. 2002. "The Sociology of Space: A User Centered View," *City & Community*, 1(4): 329-339.
- Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. 1967. *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine DeGruyter.
- Goldsmith, Pat Antonio. 2004. "Schools' Racial Mix, Students' Optimism and the Black-White and Latino-White Achievement Gaps." *Sociology of Education*, 77: 121-147.
- Hartmann, Douglas, and Darren Wheelock. 2002. "Sport as Prevention? Minneapolis' Experiment with Late-Night Basketball." *CURA [Center for Urban and Regional Affairs] Reporter* 32(3): 13-17.
- Hunt, Donald. 1996. *The Philadelphia Big 5: Great Moments in Philadelphia's Storied Basketball History*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore.
- Lyons, Robert S. 2002. *Palestra Pandemonium: The History of the Big 5*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mahoney, Joseph L. and Robert Cairns. 1997. "Do Extracurricular Activities Protect Against Early School Dropout?" *Developmental Psychology* 33: 241-253.
- Majors, Richard G., and Janet Billson. 1992. *Cool Pose*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Massey, Douglas and Nancy Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Melnick, Merrill J., Donald Sabo, and Beth E. Vanfossen. 1992. 'Educational Effects of Interscholastic Athletic Participation on African-American and Hispanic Youth', *Journal of Adolescence* 27: 295-308.
- Messner, Michael. 1989. "Masculinities and Athletic Careers." *Gender & Society* 3: 71-88.
- Philadelphia Daily News. 2003. *Philly Hoops: The Magic of Philadelphia Basketball*. Philadelphia: Camino Books.
- Rosin, James. 2003. *Philly Hoops: The SPHAs and Warriors (A Look at the First Two Professional Teams in the City of Philadelphia)*. Philadelphia: Autumn Road.
- Sassen, Saskia. 1991. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

UPCOMING TOPICS

Housing and Foreclosures
Community Colleges
Immigration and Labor Markets

Others, based on our ongoing
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

For more information,
and to access our archives, visit
<http://policymatters.ucr.edu>

Policy Matters
Volume 3, Issue 1

Scott Brooks
Making Basketball Work:
Ensuring Success in Youth Development Programs



For interviews or more information, contact:
Scott Brooks
(951) 827-5618
scott.brooks@ucr.edu

To contact editors via email:
Mindy Marks, mindy.marks@ucr.edu
Karthick Ramakrishnan,* karthick@ucr.edu

**Action editor for Volume 3, Issue 1*

Policy Matters
c/o Department of Political Science
900 University Avenue
University of California
Riverside, CA 92521