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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO THE NATION: THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF MIDNIGHT BASKETBALL

A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO

THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF MIDNIGHT BASKETBALL: FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO THE NATION

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a narrative account of the phenomenon known as Midnight Basketball. It focuses upon the transformation of Midnight Basketball from a one-man basement operation to national organization and , finally, to its inclusion in President Bill Clinton's 1994 Crime Bill. It treats Midnight Basketball as a case study of a grass roots, neighborhood-based effort to confront and control a major social problem: the rising rates of violence and incarceration among young African Americans males. In addition, it also examines the growth of the program into the world of big business and national politics. This study triangulates the constructivist approach to social problems with the public arenas model and resource mobilization theory to provide a rich and detailed narrative of the developmental process of a social movement. I use the counter-factual technique to analyze the narratives for a more detailed understanding of the developmental changes within Midnight Basketball and provide a theoretical "test" of why these changes occurred. Therefore, this social history of Midnight Basketball represents a causal interpretation which is grounded both historically and temporally.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The struggle of neighborhood residents and local community leaders to fight the rising tide of street violence in African American communities has been going on for several years and has been waged on many fronts. In this dissertation I study one of these fronts – Midnight Basketball. Midnight Basketball was designed to provide young at-risk males between the ages of 18 to 25 with a second chance in life. This program targets older youth who, by many standards, have fallen through the cracks. The dangerous situations confronting these young men compound the social isolation which they live. The founders of Midnight Basketball stepped in to provide social exposure and role models so desperately needed to help these at-risk young men lead productive lives away from crime and violence in their own communities.

In this dissertation I trace the development of Midnight Basketball from its conception in the basement of a Maryland home in 1986 to its inclusion in President Bill Clinton's 1994 Crime Bill. This research treats Midnight Basketball as a case study of a grass roots, neighborhood-based effort to confront and control a major social problem: the rising rates of violence and incarceration among young African Americans males. It also examines the growth of the program into the world of big business and national politics.

The Midnight Basketball League (MBL) was started in Glenarden, Maryland, by G. Van Standifer in 1986. He designed the league to provide young men in his town with a safe, structured, and supervised alternative to street activity between the hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m., when the temptations of crime and drug activity are the greatest. As other neighborhoods and cities adopted MBL, the National Association

of Midnight Basketball Leagues, Inc. (NAMBL) was formed to guide the activities of all chapters and oversee their growth. The leagues attracted big-money sponsors, including Nike and the Beer Institute of America, who provided uniforms, shoes, gym bags, and even NBA style championship rings. In 1991, then-President George Bush made Midnight Basketball the 124th point of light in his "1000 Points of Light" program. His intention was to underscore the desirability and effectiveness of individual volunteer work over governmental programs for addressing social ills. On March 31, 1994, the Senate and House of Representatives passed the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act," which included a provision entitled the MBL Training and Partnership Act. This provision addressed not only MBL's efforts to reduce crime and violence but also to provide educational benefits through its use of mandatory workshops. Importantly, it authorized the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to fund grants to eligible MBL programs.

The theoretical perspective guiding this dissertation is the constructivist approach to social problems advocated by Malcom Spector and John Kitsuse (1977, 1987). This perspective focuses on the natural course of a social problem. It argues that social problems are products of social movement activity – if there is no successful social movement, it contends, there will be no recognition of a condition as a social problem. Thus the task for the researcher is to identify and recount the claims and counter-claims of interested individuals and interest groups who seek to convince others that a troubling condition is indeed a social problem.

To fully examine the evolution of MBL, I use the natural history model in conjunction with the constructivist approach. Use of a natural history model in

studying social movements which address crime and delinquency issues is not new. In the 1920s, sociologists at the University of Chicago conducted case studies of various social ills and identified the social disorganization of neighborhoods as the most compelling context for examining crime and deviance. However, it was Ernst Troeltsch's (1931) work on religious sects which provided a strong endorsement of the natural history model. This position later was developed more fully by Herbert Blumer (1971), who insisted that objective conditions in themselves do not and cannot constitute a social problem. A process of collective definition making, he argued, determines the fate and career of a social problem. Thus, those working the constructivist perspective now typically present a social problem as the definitional activities surrounding a contested condition.

This dissertation recounts the natural history of Midnight Basketball through the use of a narrative. Narratives unify a number of actions and happenings into a sensible story. Events, when taken at face-value, may be discarded as discrete or separate occurrences with little or no significance. However, a narrative transforms events into a chronological chain that provides meaning and explanation for each element. Narratives are like the pieces of a puzzle: there is a certain structured order in which the pieces must be placed in order to produce an image. If all the pieces are not present or are taken out of context, a clear picture of what has been developed cannot be seen.

To derive the events for my narrative, I interviewed as many of those persons who contributed to the initial development of MBL and its development of a national association. In addition, I conducted interviews with some of the individuals who

fought over the passage of Goals 2000 and with other participants in MBL nationwide. Finally, I gathered published accounts and other archival material.

This dissertation lays the foundation for more profound work, not only in the area of social movements but also in the area of social control as well. By recording the claims and activities of persons associated with MBL and its subsequent celebrity status as a vehicle for crime prevention, I present a holistic approach to crime and delinquency prevention through combined community, industry and family initiatives.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A Constructivist Approach to Social Problems

Traditional approaches to social problems view social problems as the description and analysis of objective conditions. The dominant view, the objectivist perspective, views a social problem as a problematic condition, while the constructivist perspective views a problem as the contention that a condition is problematic. Therefore, the focus of a constructivist account of a social problem is on the claims and the claims-making activities of those who attempt to bring a recognized problematic condition to the publics attention as well as the efforts of those persons with opposing views regarding the condition.

Current interest in the constructivist approach flows from Spector and Kitsuse's (1977, 1987) synthesizing work, Constructing Social Problems. Like Blumer (1971) and others, constructivist define social problems in terms of the activities of claims makers who focus on causes of specific conditions rather than the conditions themselves. These claims makers must work diligently and effectively to raise a disputed claim to the point where it becomes a taken-for-granted fact. In cases where protagonists are ineffective at promoting their claims, the claim remains disputed at least and unrecognized at a maximum. Constructivist Naomi Aronson explains it this way:

> Successful claims-making...involves at the very least skilled documentation, the ability to command the attention of the appropriate audience, and access to resources needed to defend claims against criticism. (1984:9)

Hence, the central theme of the constructivist perspective revolves around the relationship between the claims being made about a particular social phenomenon and the manner in which those claims are made.

The central focus of this approach to social problems therefore is to account for the emergence, nature, and maintenance of claims-making and corresponding activities (Spector and Kitsuse 1987:74). The formulation of social problems in this manner focuses the attention on interaction which occurs among participants and competitors who make and respond to claims about problematic conditions and what ought or ought not to be done about them.

Viewing claims-making as an interactive process of social problem construction provides the researcher with the necessary criteria to differentiate between the claims themselves and the process of making those claims. This stance redirects the focus of study from the claims to the interactional setting in which participants make assertions and demands in an effort to gain responsive action. Hence, the features and arrangements in any community or society can be best understood by tracing the words and efforts of those who worked to establish them, often over the objections of others. For example, citizens have used petitions to enact many changes ranging from tax reform to voter redistricting. The information contained on a petition serves as the starting place for tracing or tracking the claims-making activities.

The focus of this dissertation is on the claims-making activity of the supporters and the critics of Midnight Basketball. Such an approach to social problems can take two forms, a "contextual" one or a "strict" one (Scott 1993:233).

Contextual constructivists consider it appropriate to pass occasional judgment on the claims and activities of claims-makers they describe, while strict constructivists restrict themselves to reporting claims-making without asserting whether or not the claims are valid. The main difference between these two stances is that the former allows the researcher to comment on the "factual" or objective features of a problematic condition, while the latter restricts the researcher's focus to the claims being made about the social condition.

Both perspectives have shortcomings. Richard Fuller (1938:415) pointed out that sociologist following the contextual approach occasionally leave themselves susceptible to the charge of "professional fakery." For example, in a study of claims about drugs as a social problem, what expertise would allow sociologists to comment on the addictive qualities of marijuana or its genetic effects? In this instance, sociologists place themselves in the position of being experts in an area in which their training provides no special knowledge. Conversely, Steve Woolgar and Dorothy Pawluch (1985:2165-2166) note that the approach of the strict constructivist implies the nature of the social condition is irrelevant, while simultaneously giving the impression that the status of the social condition is known or a "taken-for-granted" unchanging phenomenon. I have opted for the contextual constructivist perspective, i.e., I present the narrative from the point of view of my subjects but do occasionally comment upon the correctness of their claims by noting conflicting evidence.

Public Arenas Model

Stephen Hilgartner and Charles Bosk (1988) extend Specter and Kitsuse's work by incorporating a wide range of theoretical insights into what they call a

"public arenas" model. This model places the interactive processes of constructing social problems center stage and focuses on the arenas or social settings in which the claims-making activity takes place, the "carrying capacities" of these arenas, and the "surplus compassion" among targets of influence. The collective definition of a social problem, Hilgartner and Bosk argue, does not occur in abstractions such as "society" or "public opinion," but rather is incubated in specific places or arenas. These arenas include the media – TV, newspapers, movies, magazines, and the like – political organizations and other voluntary associations, governmental bodies and agencies, and the courts (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988:58). It is through the use of these physical social institutions that activists discuss, define, frame, dramatize, and package claims about social problems to segments of the general public.

As vehicles for communicating claims, these arenas regulate and limit the amount and type of information that is disseminated. Each arena varies in what and how much information it can carry or convey. For instance, in newspapers and magazines, there is only so much space (column inches) devoted to a particular issue or topic. In the case of television and radio there are finite minutes of air time. Therefore, the struggle to present and define an issue as a social problem becomes a very competitive process.

The public arenas model explores the context of problem definition in relation to other competitive issues. For instance, Hilgartner and Bosk (1988:67) note that problem definitions that are compatible with broad cultural themes have a better chance of survival than those that present fundamental critiques. In the case of Midnight Basketball, its link with neighborhood crime and violence prevention

promotes an image of individual responsibility – a plus in American culture. Here problem definitions which project an image of individual responsibility tend to receive much more favorable responses than those which project vague societal level responsibilities. Such images proved valuable in enhancing MBL's chances of success.

In addition, the way claims-makers package problem definitions is just as important as content to its recognition as a social problem. Protagonists who present their claims with simple yet captivating imagery tend to be more successful than those who present substantively correct but otherwise unexciting claims. Highly dramatic definitions of social problems which are portrayed on television in short, catchy snippets with a high degree of visual stimulation are especially effective. The same can also be said of properly packaged claims about historical events, court cases, and legal decisions. These too may offer readily accessible images and points of view which successfully persuade people to accept the definition of a problem.

The use of the public arenas model and the constructivist approach to social problems in telling the story of Midnight Basketball calls attention to the fact that the founders designed the program to address neighborhood crime and violence. Promoters of Midnight Basketball often used graphic pictures of children and teenagers caught in drive-by shootings and provided statistics that violent offenses committed by youth were increasing. Although they were careful not to be put into the position of having to prove that MBL actually did so, they suggested that MBL was successful in steering youth away from crime and in saving the lives of some by keeping them out of harm's way.

This understanding is extremely important in the public arenas model for studying social problems. Following the constructivist approach, I identify the protagonists and antagonists and document their claims and activities. The public arenas model further requires us to look at where and how protagonists and antagonists have carried out their claims-making activities. This alerts the researcher to the competition among a large pool of deserving problems, only a few of which will achieve celebrity status and become recognized as a significant problem. MBL, as I will show, did achieve celebrity status.

Natural History

Ernest Troeltsch (1931) and then Richard Fuller and Richard Myers (1941) developed the use of natural histories as crucial to the sociological study of a social problems. The validity of such histories was challenged by Edwin Lemert in 1951 and later re-examined by Spector and Kitsuse (1987:134), who concluded that Lemert's criticisms could be used to revise and extend Fuller and Myers' studies of natural histories.

Spector and Kitsuse (1987:137) point out that natural histories do two important things: they can call attention to the generalizing goal of a sociological analysis of social problems, and they can provide sociologists with descriptions of how things develop over time. The aim of generalization, they note, is to locate and emphasize the aspects of a phenomenon under study that are generic in nature. On the other hand, when sociologists direct their attention to history construction, the focus then becomes the sequence of events common to the histories of particular cases of social phenomena.

Blumer's (1971) treatment of natural histories serves as one of the major foundations of Spector and Kitsuse's analyses. Blumer (1971:301-304) outlined five stages through which social problems are defined: the emergence of a social problem, the legitimization of the problem, the mobilization of action, the formation of an official plan, and the implementation of the official plan. An interesting quality about Blumer's sequence is its emphasis on the problematic circumstances surrounding movement from one stage to the next. He suggests that activists intervention abilities may be limited at certain stage. Spector and Kitsuse (1987:139) adopt Blumer's concept that movement from one stage to the next may be uncertain and problematic. They note, for instance, that stagnation may require contingent strategies for redefining the issue or redirecting activities. Thus, the attention of the researcher in this instance must be turned toward uncovering the work, decisions, or changes that are required to move from one stage of development to the next.

In addition, Spector and Kitsuse also recognize official and governmental agencies as prominent parties in social problems activities. However, they go a step further than Blumer and also Fuller and Myers by examining the fate of a social problem after governmental response. Neither Blumer nor Fuller and Myers described what happens after legislation has been passed, agencies established, and programs implemented. Spector and Kitsuse (1987:142) outline four stages in a natural history:

> Stage 1: Group(s) attempt to assert the existence of some condition, define it as offensive, harmful, or otherwise undesirable, publicize these assertions, formulate controversy, and create a public or political issue over the matter.
>
> Stage 2: Recognition of legitimacy for these group(s) by some official organization, agency, or institution. This may lead to an official

investigation, proposals for reform, and the establishment of an agency to respond to those claims and demands.

Stage 3: Reemergence of claims and demands by the original group(s); or by others, expressing dissatisfaction with the established procedures for dealing with imputed conditions, the bureaucratic handling of complaints, the failure to generate a condition of trust and confidence in the procedures and the lack of sympathy for the complaints.

Stage 4: Rejection by complaint group(s) of the agency's or institution's response, or lack of response to their claims and demands, and the development of activities to create alternative parallel, or counter-institutions.

The first and second stages of their natural history correspond with Blumer's and Fuller and Myers' end state, while the third and fourth stages present a picture of what happens to a social problem once policy has been determined and implemented (Spector and Kitsuse 1987:142). It can be noted that stages three and four represent the second phase or life span of a social problem. In this case, solutions to previously acknowledged social problems can serve as the basis for renewed claims and claims-making activity of an already acknowledged social problem.

In recent natural history studies, the focus has moved away from the developmental generalizations toward more developmental comparative analyses. Accordingly, some researchers now place their attention on understanding why and how specific social problems have developed differently from others similar to them. The best known example of such a shift in theoretical direction is the world-system approach to understanding how countries that industrialized later differ from countries that industrialized earlier. In this case it is difference which becomes the focus of study, while the search for common elements is assumed to be a given or abandoned all together.

This new direction in the study of natural history seems to imply that perhaps no such thing as a natural history does not exist for social problems or perhaps such an approach misrepresents the use of the term "natural history." That is, the natural history approach of the 1930's and 1940's sought to identify common sequences of events or stages of development of a phenomenon, while more recent studies attempt to capture differences in sequence in the development of one phenomenon to the next. Whether one seeks to establish commonalties or to uncover the differences, there remain three reasons to do natural histories: detailed analysis of individual cases can shed light on how future cases are to be analyzed, it can serve as a temporary checklist of things to do, and it can be a first order of business in a substantive area of study which has no established research tradition (Spector and Kitsuse 1987:158).

Organizational Development

The transformation of Midnight Basketball is a process that did not occur on its own. By examining the development of MBL this dissertation presents a blueprint of the organizational transformation processes of a social movement. Organizational development is not a novel idea. The formalization of small group activity into a full-fledged organization provides the opportunity for the continuation of activities over time. On the surface, organizations are designed to accomplish a task effectively. However, many times in the process of accomplishing the proposed task, organizations tend to take on a life of their own and become separated from the original purpose or goal.

Often, structure or how an organization is arranged is a reflection of the central task or goal to be accomplished. For any organization there are several

possible structures that will correspond appropriately with the goals, the environment, and the participants (Bolman and Deal 1984). The issue for this dissertation is the organizational structure of MBL and how structure contributed to or detracted from the operation of Midnight Basketball in its ten years of existence.

In order to address structural questions surrounding MBL's organizational transformation, attention must be directed to the process by which organizations mobilize their resources . Resource mobilization theory holds that social movement organizations develop because of changes in group resources, organization, and opportunities for collective action (Jenkins 1983:531-532). However, what determines whether a social movement organization will be a success or a failure is its ability to attract individuals who will work to organize the individuals and the financial resources to pursue the goals of the organization. The resource mobilization approach contends that those individuals who provide money, facilities, and even labor may have no commitment to the values upon which the specific movement is based. Therefore, strict attention must be paid to the roles and organizational relationships of persons responsible for formalizing the initial concept and to the "cadre" or key players involved in the program's ascent. In the case of MBL, the ascent takes the program from the neighborhood to the nation.

In this dissertation I document the process by which an individual act or idea was transformed into an informal group, then into a formal organization. However, the analysis does not stop with the social movement organization itself. It also examines the network among organizers and counter-organizers who make up an entire social movement industry. According to John McCarthy and Mayer Zald

(1977), a social movement is formed when a group espouses a set of opinions and beliefs which are in opposition to, or challenge, some element of the existing social structure of a society. Counter-movements are comprised of persons or groups opposing a social movement with opinions or actions.

The development of a social movement organization is a little more complex than that of a social movement. Someone must actually create social movement organizations by formalizing informal practices. For example, the Civil Rights Movement created many social movement organizations that subscribed to its preference for structural changes aimed at "justice for African Americans" (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1218-1219), including the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The objectives and sub-objectives of the Civil Rights Movement can be found within these organizations.

Social movement industries can best be described as the networks of social movement organizations and the counter-organizations who oppose them. For example, the Women's Liberation Movement may include members of the Civil Rights Movement, abortion rights activists, and the National Organization for Women (NOW), who are opposed by, among others, Women Against Equality. Taken together, these organizations make up a social movement industry. Further, women's liberation could be considered part of abortion rights, which could be considered part of a broader civil rights movement, which could in itself be considered part of a much broader civil liberties movement (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1220).

Methodology

My primary concern in writing this dissertation is not to ascertain whether or not Midnight Basketball programs are effective. Instead, the concern of this dissertation is understanding why and how this program actually came into existence and became the center of a national debate. Since the focus of this dissertation is to describe the program's history, the collection and presentation of qualitative data form the core of the evidence. Qualitative sociological inquiry methods have a rich history in American sociology. Perhaps the most productive qualitative studies came about between 1910 and 1940 with the emergence of the "Chicago School" of sociology (Taylor and Bogdon 1984). During this period, researchers at the University of Chicago produced a large number of detailed participant observational studies of urban life (Anderson 1923; Cressey 1932; Thrasher 1927; Wirth 1928; Zorbough 1929; Shaw 1931; and Sutherland 1937).

Qualitative methodologies refer to research which produce descriptive data, i.e., derive from people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior. Qualitative data provide rich descriptions and explanations of the context, substance and process of the phenomenon under study. Through the use of qualitative data, the chronological flow of the emergence of a particular phenomenon can be preserved along with an understanding of the event sequences that have led to the development of such a phenomenon. Many times qualitative data lead researchers to move beyond their original conceptions and to revise or generate new conceptual frameworks from which to understand it. Qualitative studies have a quality of "undeniability" (Miles and Huberman 1994:1). The organization of incidents or stories in the words of the

actual participants provides a concrete, vivid, interpretation which proves to be more convincing to researchers, policy makers, and practitioners than a presentation of summarized numbers.

Although qualitative research yields a vast amount of information, this does not preclude its shortcomings. The reliability and validity of findings generated from qualitative data has been the subject of doubt for many scholars (Dawson 1979; LeCompte & Geotz 1982). One of the primary pitfalls of conducting qualitative research focuses upon the sources from which the data were collected. For instance, when Christine Williams (1995) conducted interviews with men and women working in occupations traditionally dominated by women, she found that respondents phrased their responses differently depending upon the gender of the interviewer. According to Williams (1995):

> When talking to the male interviewer, respondents tended to state their opinions about gender differences in a much more direct manner, typically using an "us versus them" (or "men versus women") framework. In my interviews, many men seemed reluctant to make any claims about "all women," and they tried to avoid offending my apparently feminist sensibilities. (P. 192)

This tendency is known as "social desirability bias." Social desirability bias is the tendency of voluntary research participants to adjust their statements so to make them sound more desirable to the interviewer. In other words, they have a tendency to tailor their responses as to not offend the interviewer and many times this tailoring of responses can lead to inaccurate conclusions.

Bias may be included in the interpretation of the data as well. Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman (1994) point out three archetypal biases that may occur in qualitative research:

1. the holistic fallacy: interpreting events as more patterned and congruent than they really are, looping off the many loose ends of which social life is made;

2. elite bias: over-weighting data from articulate, well-informed, usually high-status informants and under representing data from less articulate, lower-status ones;

3. going native: losing your perspective or your "bracketing" ability, being co-opted into the perceptions and explanations of local informants. (P. 263)

These three biases correspond to three major judgmental problems: "representativeness," "availability," and "weighting" (Nisbett and Ross 1980:7-8). Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994:263) note that establishing confidence in qualitative data depends upon ones ability to link together three levels of understanding: the meanings and interpretations of ones informants; the researcher's interpretation of the meanings; and the confirmatory theory-connected operations surrounding the data collection process. This can be done through a process known as "triangulation of sources." Here, researchers utilize a variety of data sources that can be called upon to access the particular events as well as the motives and interests of actors. Many times diaries, correspondence, and newspaper reports are used to cross-check and validate interviews and observation (Denzin 1989:190-198).

In keeping with the constructivist approach, this study focuses upon the key protagonists and antagonists in the telling of the social history of Midnight Basketball. Only those individuals identified as being key protagonist and antagonist were selected as potential interviewees, a technique known as "purposive sampling." Purposive sampling is a type of nonprobability sample which relies upon the investigator's judgment as the main criteria for selection of the sample population.

Nonprobability samples are used when the purpose of a study is to undertake some kind of exploratory investigation. In telling the social history of Midnight Basketball, individuals who were actively supporting or protesting "Midnight Basketball" were selected to represent the target population form which to gather interview data.

Qualitative research utilizes various methods of data collection such as ethnographies, case studies, and social histories. For this study, the social history method is preferred. Although social histories do qualify as case studies, they are conducted on past experiences of a group for the purpose of eliciting discoveries and insights that can illuminate the experience of other, similar groups. This is somewhat contrary to the case study which examines life histories, or partial or total biographies of individuals (Orum et. al. 1991:3). The social history of Midnight Basketball is constructed using a narrative derived from interviews and archival data. Support documents were drawn from congressional records, newspaper articles, and video presentations. Combining these support sources not only served as a cross reference for events but it also provided a rich and more detailed social history.

Narratives

In recent articles in the Annual Review of Sociology and Sociological Methods and Review, Andrew Abbott (1983, 1992) provided a comprehensive definition and rationale for the use of narratives in sociology. Much of my approach to telling the social history of Midnight Basketball is drawn from his work.

Today when sociologists propose the use of narratives as a methodology they usually intend a sociological account of a particular event or action in a chronological sequence. The chronology provides an analytic "diagram" that produces a coherent

rationale for what has taken place. In contrast, quantitative studies substitute real numbers for words and other attributes, resulting in the numerical pattern which subsumes persons and events into more general categories. Narratives, however, identify particular social actors in particular social places at particular social times (Abbott 1992:439). This places the focus upon the social process by which social actors interact in time and space. In short, it is a form of what Wilbur Scott calls "sociological story telling" (Scott 1993:232).

However, despite the logical implications of narratives, the dominant empirical traditions in sociology have replaced process and narratives with the notion of causality. According to Abbott (1992:433), the most powerful work to give credence in American sociology to causality over narratives was the 1951 translation of Emile Durkheim's Suicide. Durkheim's work introduced a new way of examining social phenomena without diving into the interactive story line of each agent involved by replacing narratives with variables. Variables then are the causal agents whose social relevance can be quantified. The norm in contemporary sociological studies is to construct a social reality by analyzing variables (Abbott 1992:432). This approach attributes causality to variables rather than social agents.

For example, Abbott notes the statement, "education (X) increases occupational attainment (Y)," can be interpreted in two ways (1992:431). First, it can present the impression that the causal force (education) determines an abstract entity (occupational attainment). Here one sees social phenomena in terms of the relationship between the two variables without fully understanding the social interactive process which brings about the relationship attributed to them. Secondly,

it can be treated as a shortcut to addressing three basic statements: (a) education generally precedes occupational achievement in the life course, (b) the two are highly correlated across individuals, and (c) it is possible to establish a pattern where occupational achievement flows directly from education. Here causality becomes a quick way of summarizing narratives (Abbott 1992:431).

The end result of sociological studies that ignore process are theories which give the impression that the variables are the real agents in motion. Abbott notes that this is an interesting development since both action and process have largely disappeared from empirical sociology while maintaining a central place in much of both classical and recent sociological theories (Abbott 1992:429-230). For example, in his study of religion and economics, Max Weber (1949) placed the search for ideal-type narratives at the heart of his methodological writings. The use of narratives are also at the heart of the tradition of the Chicago School of sociology – a focus on social processes was at the core of the works of Parks and Burgess (1921). Their students continued this central focus on interaction in their work by describing typical patterns in the form of natural histories. They wrote about such phenomena as gangs (Thrasher 1927), occupational careers (Cressey 1932), and revolutions (Edwards 1927). More recently, the work of Peter Abell (1987), Abbott (1990), and Larry Griffin (1993) have demonstrated the use of narratives in a qualitative scientific manner distinct from the journalistic interpretations not considered scientific. These sociologists have combined narratives into "event-structure analyses" (ESA) to provide a formal qualitative interpretation of narrative sequences.

The use of narratives is consistent with the constructivist perspective since it

provides an analytical sequential account of actions or events. The constructivist approach sends the researcher through the process of theory building in the form of claims about a social condition. Narratives allow for the documentation of the process by which a claim is made and a social condition is defined.

In this dissertation I recount the evolution of Midnight Basketball as it moves from the thoughts of one man to a catch-as-catch-can neighborhood league to a formal network of nationwide leagues. Sociological story telling allows for the construction of an interactive timeline. The narrative depicting the natural history of Midnight Basketball allows for an inside look at the developmental process of a social movement -- in this case, the struggle of neighborhoods and communities to combat crime and delinquency through a sports league targeting young adults. The interviews depict the activities of league organizers and community members who support and oppose the Midnight Basketball concept.

While the narratives provide a description of the MBL's development, they also provide insight into the social and political factors involved in the program's development. Hence, this convention for conveying information, coupled with the constructivist approach to social movements, allows for a thorough interpretation of the development of a controversial program.

Event-Structure Analysis

Sequential analysis examines an event by taking into account its particular context and by documenting its time line in the from of a story. This analysis is not a particular technique but rather embodies a set of questions about social processes and a collection of techniques to answer them (Abbott 1995). In sociology there are few

formal theoretical analyses of sequences. However, the works of Bruce Mayhew et. al. (1971), Abbott (1983), and, most recently, Griffin (1993) have characterized the theoretical and methodological literature on sequences, and David Heise (1989) developed a soft-ward program, "Ethno," to assist in doing sequential analysis. Heise designed event-structure analysis (ESA) as a replacement for the Ethno software program (Griffin 1993:1105).

ESA reduces the narrative to a bare-bones account by creating a lexicon of actions and events and by formalizing the way actions and events are causally related to one another. Basically, ESA examines the sequential order of a narrative in a relational format asking a series of "If-then" or "What if" questions. For example, the researcher might ask, "Would event C have occurred if actor A had not done action B," or, "How likely is it that event C could have occurred through some other chain of events?" The questions help the analyst sort out the causal sequence, to detect any weaknesses in the chronology, and to refine it. The responses to the questions are transformed into a diagram of the logical structure of the actions which underlie the narrative. The diagram then represents the event's structure and the analyst's interpretation of causal connections among sequences constituting the chronology (Griffin 1993:1107).

The best application of this work can be found in Griffin's (1993) illustrative account of a lynching which occurred in the 1930's. This work demonstrates how one can use ESA to build replicable, generalizable causal interpretations of events. I employ ESA in the latter part of the dissertation to provide such an interpretation of Midnight Basketball.

Narrative Sources

The organizers who put together MBL are the primary sources for the organizational and structural components of this dissertation. Program participants, sponsors, and activists serve as sources for examining the arenas in which the program was promoted. In addition, this research also presents the views of the persons who opposed the development of the program in its initial stage and in its transformation on the national scene from an education based program to a crime and delinquency prevention based program.

My initial contacts for this research took place in October of 1994 with two of the supporters of Oklahoma City MBL -- Wayne Thompson and Valenthia Doolin. They directed me to Mary Myrick who was responsible for organizing the partnership between Oklahoma City and MBL's national board. Myrick in turn directed me to Stan Hebert, MBL's national director. In an attempt to contact Hebert in June of 1995, I reached Eric Standifer, the son of the founder G. Van Standifer.

At about the same time, Mary Claude of Brooklyn, New York, informed me that New York had organized a state program. On November 18, 1995, I traveled to New York City to meet with Mike Klein, the director of the New York State MBL. New York is the only state which has a statewide program.

On the March 30, 1996, I met with Senator Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill.) during her visit to the University of Oklahoma. She explained the nature of her involvement in the debates over Midnight Basketball during the hearings in the U.S. Senate on Goals 2000. She saw MBL as vehicle for addressing the problems of at-risk youth in terms of education rather than incarceration. In Senator Moseley-

Braun's words:

> The program just makes sense. I'd rather take a chance and invest in programs that seek to educate and mentor the youth rather than putting these youth away without trying to correct the circumstances that got them in this shape in the first place. To think only of where to house them once they break the law is almost like applying a band-aid to a mortal wound. (Personal interview 1996)

After meeting with Senator Moseley-Braun, I contacted Stan Hebert who invited me to visit the home office in San Francisco and to attend the ten-year anniversary of MBL in Washington D.C. On June 6, 1996, I traveled to San Francisco, California, to meet Hebert, Standifer, and Barbara Edmiston. On June 25, 1996, I went to Washington D.C. to attend MBL's ten-year anniversary conference. During the conference I met with MBL organizers, sponsors, and participants in attendance from all over the country and Puerto Rico. I conducted personal interviews with Frank Burks, director of Chicago MBL; Anthony Bradley, a participant in the Chicago MBL; Karen and Nelson Standifer, Glenarden, Maryland, MBL directors; Larry Gray, San Francisco MBL director; Emmanuel Hunt, Atlanta MBL director; Leon Reid, MBL treasurer; Martha Standifer, wife of the founder G. Van Standifer; and Heide Gardner, Standifer's first assistant. In addition to meeting many of MBL's key persons, I also gathered important historical data, newspaper articles, and video tapes. Finally, on November 21, 1996, I traveled to Chicago, Illinois, where I met with Gil Walker, MBL national commissioner. Mr. Walker is credited with centralizing MBL's training component. He also helped place and keep the program in the political arena through his political ties with Senator Moseley-Braun and Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.). Appendices A and B contain a listing of these interviews and contacts, respectively.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF MIDNIGHT BASKETBALL

Basketball is a game, midnight is a time of evening, and the two put together provide the framework for a national program. Midnight Basketball is a program which targets young men between the ages of 18 and 25. According to recent Bureau of Justice Statistic (1988) reports, this is the age group most likely at risk of being killed or incarcerated. The bureau reports that two-thirds of all arrests and three quarters of all uniform crime report index arrest are of persons under age thirty (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1988:42). Many times the acts which eventually lead to the incarceration or death of these young men occur between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. (Katz, New York Times 1989:51). This information inspired a first year town manager of Glenarden, Maryland, to put his career, his creditability, and his life on the line to develop a program which has come to be known as "Midnight Basketball."

G. Van Standifer retired as a computer systems analyst with the FAA in 1985 at the age of fifty-seven and successfully ran for town manager in 1986. Three months into his term he made an interesting observation about violence and young African American males in Prince George's County. Standifer noticed that young African American males who were neither drug dealers nor gang members nonetheless were being killed or incarcerated at an alarming rate. Many, he noted, were simply young men in the wrong place at the wrong time. In addition, he also noticed that most of the deaths and criminal acts were in the late night and early morning hours.

Standifer liked to refer to the young men between the ages of 18 and 25 as the "older neglected generation" (9 Awards, 1989). By this he meant they were high risk young adults who were unemployed, had dropped out of school or were not especially talented athletes, who needed a constructive alternative to a night on the streets. He explained it this way: "Generally speaking, where there are huge blocks of free time, drug and alcohol abuse go up. The idea here is to use up as much of that free time as possible" (Salomon, Maryland Weekly 1988:9). Standifer's solution to the problem was fairly simple: get them off the street between these peak periods and save their lives.

Doing this proved to be a challenge. First, Standifer had to come up with an alternative that the 18-to-25 year olds would agree to and want to be involved in. After talking with and observing the young men in his neighborhood, he noticed one common interest among most of them: they were all either playing basketball or watching someone play basketball. Standifer hit upon the idea of starting a basketball league and have it run between the hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. He observed that most of the guys hung out into the early morning hours because there was nothing better for them to do. Hanging out at these hours could get one killed or jailed. Standifer felt strongly that his program should offer these young men an alternative to just hanging out into the wee hours of the morning.

Standifer knew that the alternative must also be something of their choosing and, in this case, their game of choice was basketball. Commenting upon the attraction of the game, Standifer remarked during a television interview:

> You could take a basketball goal and hang it in the middle of the desert and in a half hour someone would come along and start

> executing slam dunks, such is the magnetism of the game. (Noland 1989)

Now that Standifer had an idea for the program, he had to put his plan into action. This meant he had to bring together those parties who would make this vision a reality. Recruiting participants proved easier than expected. Standifer persuaded Donnie Simpson, a well-known disc jockey at a local radio station, to run public service announcements to get the word out about the league and its first draft camp. In addition, an administrator at Howard University lent a hand at getting local support. The program also received help from a local newspaper reporter for the Greater Washington Trade, Parrish Lynn Demy.

Securing local support proved a greater challenge. Glenarden mayor, Jim Fletcher, told Standifer there was no money in the town budget to support such a program. The local high schools were of no help. The only city support came from Glenarden's Parks and Recreation Department. The department offered to provide a facility and equipment, but they could not provide staff or security. The staff and security for the first Midnight Basketball League came from an unexpected source: the State Department of Corrections. Correction officers volunteered their time as the league's first coaches. In exchange, volunteers were allotted flex-time to allow them to coach the teams during the hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. The officers' motivation came from a desired need to give back to their community. For example, in a television report about the program, correctional officers Michael Carter and Ronald Smith commented:

> It was important for me to get involved because I have a need to get involved in the community. (Noland 1989)

> I live in a neighborhood where it all originated from, so I knew what was going on also. So I felt really good about steppin' in and trying to help out, make a difference. (Noland 1989)

These officers also felt that they had more to offer these young men than basketball. They wanted to give the guidance and chance to be the best person they could be because that is what someone gave to them when they were young. For example, correctional officers Kenneth Gray and Michael Carter gave the following response when asked why he got involved as a coach:

> For 18 to 21 it's a very important time in a kid that age [in] life and they need a little guidance at that age. (Noland 1989)

> I see them as more than just athletes. There are certain things that must be developed in a young man's life in order for him to be a successful man and I try to bring some of those characters to the front stage. Try to develop their character, try to develop their confidence. (Noland 1989)

Volunteer coaches conducted the first draft for the league on June 21, 1986. All the youngsters and young men who signed up were accepted to play on teams, but the coaches decided through a draft for which teams the players would play. In a private meeting the coaches drafted players in much the same fashion as in the National Basketball Association: the coaches took turns selecting players for their respective teams according to each player's skill level (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 1994:4). Such a draft dispersed players of different abilities and skill levels throughout the league to provide some sort of balance of talent.

Securing a building and providing security were not the only issues Standifer had to confront. He also had to deal with the concerns of his fellow citizens. For example, some people in Glenarden wanted some kind of program, but did not like

the idea of basketball at midnight. Standifer recalled the controversy and defended his proposed time for the games to be played:

> In the beginning the citizens, a lot of citizens, were against it. They wanted me to move the time up and...I felt that this was contrary to what we were trying to accomplish because that target group is going to be in the street, there's no question about it, in the wee hours of the morning. (Noland 1989)

In a newspaper interview he reinforced his logic and commitment to the 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. time frame:

> If you could fill 24 hours of a young adults day, you could eliminate a lot of the problems. Since we can't do that, we've chosen what we feel is the most vulnerable time frame. (Salomon, Maryland Weekly 1988:9)

Standifer's approach to parents and businesses was one which preached direct involvement. According to Standifer, "A lot of people feel that drug abuse is a police problem. Once you've adopted that attitude, you've already lost the battle" (Salomon, Maryland Weekly 1988:9). Standifer challenged parents and businesses in Glenarden to become directly involved in preventing the spread of drug abuse in their community by actively supporting Midnight Basketball.

Standifer ran the first midnight basketball program from the basement of his home. The league had 60 participants under the direction of coaches from the Department of Corrections. Games were played at the Glenarden Community Center from 10 p.m. until 2 a.m. The season ran from June through August. Remembering these first days of the league, Martha Standifer mentioned that the first uniforms consisted of nothing more than stick-on numbers on a T-shirt, and during one game when the air conditioning was broken in the gym, the letters fell off. Despite its meager budget, the program persevered. Standifer stated his commitment and

determination during an interview with "Over the Edge" reporter Barry Noland:

> These kids have a hard way when they're looking at four hundred billion dollar [illegal drug] industry. A four hundred billion dollar tax free industry! And we're trying to tell em, "Naw, come on, don't do that come on and work hard and maybe you'll get a decent job somewhere down the line maybe, there's no guarantee." I don't envy them the choices they have to make. But we have to believe that somewhere out of that group of kids that we've targeted, there's still some, there's some values there that will do it the hard way. We just have to find them. I just hate what the drug culture is doin' to the country in general and to Prince George's County in particular. We have to try, we have to try. (Noland 1989)

Standifer funded the first league with one hundred dollars earned from a carnival which he was only able to run one out of the four days planned. Popeye's Fried Chicken provided the food for the participants. Although they did not have police security, Standifer acquired a police paddy wagon which he strategically placed outside of the gymnasium in order to enforce the league's anti-violence stand. Heide Gardner, family friend and later his associate, recalled the night the league's stand against violence was tested. It was during the third game of the 1986 season when a fight broke out between two spectators. However, much to everyone's amazement, the participants on each team escorted the two fighters out of the gym. This incident later was reported by Washington Post writer, Lynn Hall, who commented on the poise and restraint shown by the players (Heide Gardner 1996).

These themes permeated the operation of the league. For example, when asked about the program and its purpose, Standifer stated:

> The midnight basketball league is not really about playin' basketball, it's about providing a vehicle upon which citizens, businesses, and institutions can get involved in the war against drug and alcohol abuse. (Noland 1989)

After the first season it became clear to Standifer that he had to have more

sponsors and funding if the league was to survive. One of the first imperatives was to develop a trademark in order to establish a presence in the community. Standifer met with representatives of Duane Graves Graphics, the company designed the Midnight Basketball trademark and logo. The trademark depicts the center of a basketball court with a basketball, above which are five stars and a waxing moon with the words, "The Alternative." The stars and moon, in addition to representing the league's unusual time of play, signify the league's five areas of development – health, education, work, culture, and community service – and helping these young people reach their full potential. The words signify what the program is, an alternative to hanging out on the streets and getting involved in drug and alcohol abuse as well as other acts of crime and violence. In 1987 Dixie Sporting Goods became the first vendor to print the league's logo and trademark.

The program also incorporated after the first season. The incorporation and trademark provided an image by which members of the community could readily identify the program. This also provided a vehicle for approaching potential sponsors. A workshop component was also added as a means to attract and keep sponsors.

The league's first official guidelines for player conduct, on the other hand, was designed to attract and retain participants. In putting together the policies and procedures for the league, Standifer paid close attention to the players and their needs. For example, the league stipulated that every participant must play in a game regardless of ability. Standifer explained this stance to a reporter:

> The league exists so that all these kids will feel good about what they're doing. It would be self-defeating to cater to the best players.

> Certain players wouldn't show up if they didn't get to play, and they'd be out on the street. (Katz, New York Times 1989:51)

To ensure the "all play" policy, Standifer set a minimum of one full quarter of play per participant. He defended this position repeatedly, stating: "If they don't play they won't come, so it's very important that they all get a reasonable amount of playing time. We say a full quarter" (Noland 1989).

According to Heide Gardner, the policies and procedures of the program were literally pieced together by Standifer as they went through the first session. A chart listing the code of conduct contained the following rules:

> No Cursing
> No squabbling, gossiping or discourteous behavior
> No hats worn in-doors
> No weapons allowed inside MBL facilities or MBL activities
> No smoking in MBL facilities
> No alcoholic beverages at MBL facilities

All MBL participants were required to sign the player code of conduct. The signature statement read:

> I, _____, agree to conduct myself in accordance to the above MBL players code of conduct. I further agree to promote this code among my friends, visitors and other guests of MBL activities. I understand that breaking this code can result in my being held from further MBL activities. (MBL Player Code of Conduct 1987)

The 1987 season saw a more structured program and increased financial support. The first corporate sponsors of the league was the Beer Institute of America. This sponsorship was followed by other local businesses. Mark Vogel, president of a real estate business in Bowie, Maryland, stated that he heard about the program in the local paper and was reminded of the time when he was growing up and it was hard to stay on the straight and narrow. Vogel's decision to help fund the program inspired a fellow employee, David Berg, to become involved also. Berg explains that he was

hooked on the program from the start. In a newspaper interview, Berg described why he supported the program:

> It's local, it's active, it's catchy, but most of all, it works, whenever kids feel a lack of options or attention, there is a sense of desperation. When you have that kids start to say yes [to drugs], Midnight Basketball gives kids a choice. (Salomon, Maryland Weekly 1988:9)

The 1987 season also brought support from the Fraternal Order of Police of Prince George's County. In addition, the coaches for that season came from the local U.S. Marshall Service. With the increased financial support, Standifer was able to provide silk screen T-shirts, trophies, and security. Team membership rose from 60 participants in 1986 to 72 in 1987.

The 1988 season saw the league increase from 72 participants to 84 participants. This season also gave Standifer more success in the recruiting of donors. The league offered players partial scholarships at vocational schools as a way to reward them and to extend their self determination and discipline off the court and into the marketplace. At first the players did not apply for the scholarships, but Standifer remained optimistic and carried them over into the 1989 season, commenting, "When you're young sometimes you don't think ahead too much so this time – we'll get some parents behind the idea, too" (Katz, New York Times 1989:51). The level of interest in the program also increased due to local newspaper and Washington Post and New York Times coverage of the program. Inquiries about MB began to come in from officials in Atlanta, Georgia; Boston, Massachusetts; Detroit, Michigan., and Wilmington, North Carolina (Katz, New York Times 1989:51).

The enthusiasm for Midnight Basketball spread despite the fact that no studies

had been done to indicate that the program reduced drug abuse or late-night crime. Nonetheless, the local police department in Glenarden was convinced the program was having an effect. In a newspaper interview with the New York Times, Chief Morris Lewis of Glenarden, Maryland, made the following comment about the program: "The idea that they've got some where to go at night is a sound project leading young men away from the temptation of crime and violence. We support it" (Katz, New York Times 1989:51).

In 1989 Midnight Basketball began to expand beyond Glenarden. Although inquires had come from Atlanta, Boston, and Detroit, there was no official commitment to establishing the leagues. Chicago was the first inquiring city to establish Midnight Basketball leagues. There Midnight Basketball came to the attention of Vince Lange, chair of the Chicago Housing Authority, who learned of the program while watching television in New York. Lange asked Gil Walker, Director of Sports and Recreation Programs for the Chicago Housing Authority, to find out what the program was all about.

Gil Walker was no stranger to the game of basketball. He had played college ball in Texas and semi-pro basketball in Mexico. Walker recalls his initial response to the concept:

> I can tell you quite honestly, I thought Mr. Standifer has lost his mind, playing basketball between the hours of 10 and 2 at night. Especially here in public housing where we have all these different types of gangs and other nonsense that's going on. (Personal interview 1996)

However, despite these apprehensions, Walker visited Standifer in Glenarden. Walker described his first meeting with Standifer:

> Something very, very unique happened. And I think very mystical. When I talked with Mr. Standifer my heart just kept on and started

> vibrating, even more than it does now, and I felt chills throughout my body. (Personal interview 1996)

The image of Standifer and what he was trying to do reminded Walker of himself. Walker recalled that when he was growing up there was someone just like Standifer in his life. With that image in mind Walker understood what Standifer was trying to do.

Walker returned to Chicago and reported to Vince Lange what he had found, he was convinced that such a program could work in Chicago:

> I told Vince that this program was doable here in Chicago, but we are too arrogant and sophisticated here in Chicago for me to just do a t-shirt and roll out a basketball. We goin' have in-groups and all that too, no way a program like that is going to work here in Chicago unless we make some serious adjustments. (Personal interview 1996)

Lange told Walker to develop the program the way he thought it would be most effective in Chicago.

> What I did was something that I don't think borders on genius but everyone else does, and this is I just copied the NBA. Everything they do in the National Basketball Association we do in our Midnight Basketball League. I mean we give fourteen-carat gold rings to our championship teams, we do the gym shoes, we do the uniforms, we do the warm-ups, we hire coaches, we hire officials. (Personal interview 1996)

Walker knew that the league he was proposing had to be strong enough to compete with the street. He knew that what had inspired him and others like himself was the NBA. In explaining his understanding and empathy for the players and the choices they have to make, Walker stated:

> I don't envy these young men. If I was growing during this time and I was between 17 and 26 and someone told me that I could earn four or five hundred dollars a day just for being a look-out for the dope man, I might have been a look-out for the dope man. (Personal interview 1996)

In attempts to help the young men with these choices, Walker often relied upon his ability to "deal in reality" and make the youth think about what is really happening:

> Um, what I try to tell them is, you show me someone, show me one person that been involved in that dope game that's got grandchildren and they see their grandchildren, that ain't in jail. Show me one person. I ain't met nobody that been involved with some illegal things and got some integrity and some credibility and not looking over they shoulder or they not dead. I mean, that Cadillac that you buy today, goin' wear out boy. That Mercedes that you buy, goin' wear out. That gold, you can't put that gold in no casket and take it with you. So them some hard decisions to make. (Personal interview 1996)

The league that Walker proposed would be funded through the Housing Authority and private sponsorship from the business community. As the Director of Sports and Recreational Programs, Walker controlled a budget of half a million dollars, and half of that budget would be allocated to running the league. When Lange received Walker's proposal, he immediately gave approval to begin the Chicago Midnight Basketball League. Walker, Frank Burks and Henry Clark coordinated and ran the first Chicago league. The staff that Walker assembled was made up of men much like himself – all had basketball and participation in athletics in their background. For instance, Burks, a native of Chicago, went to the University of Wisconsin on a basketball scholarship and was the first African American to play baseball at that University. After college the Atlanta Hawks drafted Burks, and from there he went on to play for the famous Harlem Globetrotters.

According to Walker, the process of putting the first league together was like caring for a baby:

> We did everything, we did the recruitment, went out and ordered the uniforms, we designed the uniforms, we found the coaches, we hired coaches, we oriented the coaches, ah, we did the basketball. You look

> at that basketball behind you, you see my name is on that basketball, "The Rock, Gil Walker, Commissioner." I mean we did the t-shirt, I mean we developed everything, every aspect of the game program you can think of, we did it all. (Personal interview 1996)

This sentiment was also reinforced by Burks who commented:

> Gil, myself, and Hank, we was the only ones 'board our staff and we started it in '89. The three of us, we didn't have nobody else, it was just the three. We took the program from scratch and people from all over the United States heard about it. We was on Good Morning America, CNN, 60 Minutes. We was on all of the top programs nationwide. (Personal interview 1996)

However, there were many skeptics of the program in Chicago. Columnist George Will summarized the central concern as follows: "Give these guys uniforms, you'll make matters worse - create new gangs" (Washington Post 1990:A23). Asked about this criticism, Walker said in rebuttal:

> A truly phenomenal thing that happened when we started our midnight basketball league, I have guys who are gang-affiliated, different gangs and that type of thing. Come into the gym and all of a sudden those barriers are broken down because of basketball. Basketball transcends gang affiliation, it transcends race, it transcends economic situation, basketball transcends all that nonsense. (Personal interview 1996)

However, Will did praise Walker's approach toward MBL participants: "There are men like Walker who see the grace and discipline and self taught skills of ghetto basketball players and see something more, an unmined lode of all sorts of talents" (Washington Post 1990:A23).

Will also commented on Walker's ability to mix members of rival gangs on teams and get away with it. During an interview with Will, Walker recalled a game in which the lights went out in the gym for "a whole seven minutes." His basic "urban instincts" told him to get his back against the wall and wait for the worst.

However, much to his surprise, for those seven minutes no one moved and when the lights came back on, the game went on. (Washington Post 1990: A23)

Walker accounted for this phenomenon by noting:

> What I do is this, I'm not going into any community that's at a war. Midnight Basketball is not set up to stop gang activity, it's wrong. But I do go in the community and call a town hall meeting and ask all the different franchises and or individuals to come in and which is quote, unquote, all the different gang leaders. (Personal interview 1996)

Once the gang leaders are in the town meeting, Walker begins, as he likes to say, "baiting the hook." He begins to show them all of the things which go along with playing in their league. Walker is quick to point out to potential players that his program is the best:

> There is no program out there in America that's goin' give everything I give. I mean my program is better than any college program. My program is better than any program out there, less say the NBA. I mean they just don't come over and give gym shoes and socks, and warm-ups, and uniforms. (Personal interview 1996)

Walker also tells potential players that to play in the Chicago league is a privilege, not a right. There are twenty communities overseen by the Chicago Housing Authority. Walker uses this fact as leverage. He knows that if one community has something the others will want the same thing, including Midnight Basketball. As he put it, " I got somethin' that they want." Once the initial interest is shown, Walker asks the different informal community leaders for their support:

> I ask them one of two things: if I have one problem before, during or after the Midnight Basketball League, I'm gone and I quit. I'm leavin' and I'm not comin' back. Can you do this? And I get a resounding, yes! (Personal interview 1996)

Walker uses basketball and the NBA like atmosphere as a hook. Once he has their attention he puts his real motive to work. According to Walker, the real purpose of his program is not basketball:

> We do workshops on how to treat and respect a lady. We do workshops on how to get along with your neighbor, how to get along with a boss who is getting on your case. I mean things that you and I probably take for granted, but these guys cannot take for granted because they don't have it. In fact the mindset, if you will, of these guys – 17 to 22 for the most part – are like 12 and 13 year olds. Ok, they weren't privilege to the support that you and I had growing up. So, all we're trying to do under the guise of basketball is, ok, is bridge that gap and being the support system for them. (Personal interview 1996)

As with the Glenarden leagues, the Chicago league coordinated its activities with the Chicago Police Department. Walker explains: "Now don't get me wrong, this program is coordinated very well with the Chicago Police Department. At every game I got police cars there and so on and so forth and that type of thang" (Personal interview 1996). However, the overall relationship is one which is based upon mutual respect and trust. Walker explains:

> I let them know I'm in charge, not y'all. Don't pat none of my guys down, don't search none of my guys. If you see a guy who's wanted over here, don't bust him at the Midnight Basketball. 'Cause I, my creditability is out here also. And so this can't be a haven for y'all to catch criminals. (Personal interview 1996)

Walker also noted that his statement to the police is also turned around as a statement for the participants:

> Ok now, but I tell my guys to call a town meeting, if any of your boys are wanted that means they may get caught out there at the Midnight Basketball, call 'em down. I don't care if you a murderer and you out, that ain't my business, if you sellin' dope, that ain't none of my business. But if you get caught that's my business because you not goin' break the law during the day and come out here and play ball at night, it's just that simple. I'm not goin' get in yo business but I'm

> goin' put you out of mine, when you get into mine. (Personal interview 1996)

About 80 percent of the players in the Chicago league live in the projects or public housing. If Chicago's public housing was a city, it would be the second largest city in Illinois with a population of more than 155,000. Before the league began there were more than 100 different gang factions operating with approximately 30,000 members (Will, Washington Post 1990:A23). Walker commented:

> Since 1989 I been doin' this program, everyone of these guys have had some type of problem or excursion with the law prior to becoming involved with the Midnight Basketball. I ain't never met a black man that has, that has not ever had some type of skirmish with the law, ok. Most of these guys been in jail before, ok. Not one has been in trouble for any reason since being involved in the Midnight Basketball league. That's a phenomenal statistic. (Personal interview 1996)

Despite this statistical claim, Walker and his staff insist that Midnight Basketball does not fight crime or gangs. Burks, for example, states:

> We not the police, you know, we don't profess to be. I hear, ah, a lot of 'em talkin' 'bout we cut crime. We ain't into cutting crime. Police don't cut crime and they get all the money to do everything with and they have the expertise for it. And how you expect us to cut it and you can't. And then you don't want to give us no money to run the program. (Personal interview 1996)

Chicago started its 1990 Midnight Basketball season with 16 teams. The leagues scoring and team standings appeared in the Sun Times. Coaches were provided a $500 dollar budget which was directed toward uniform cleaning for the whole season. Walker solicited sponsors and also sold teams as franchises. Walker explains their approach as nothing more than a marketing strategy:

> I also did something else, very instantaneous, and we just used a marketing strategy. Well, you may not can afford a team in the NBA, but for just $2000 to $5000 dollars you can own your very own team in the Midnight Basketball League. And my phone jumped off the

> proverbial hook when I went public with that. (Personal interview 1996)

The overwhelming response to the idea of selling MBL team franchises reinforced Walker's belief that media can be used as a means of social reform: "But you see I'm Hollywood, I believe in TV and newspapers as social reform. I mean that the attraction and because my program was analogous to the NBA, I set it up like that" (Personal interview 1996).

The franchise idea also represented a new audience for the program. According to Walker:

> The people who say this is a novel idea using sports to build character, and I played team sports, anybody that played team sports. Anybody that played team sports, it appeals to what we're trying to do and that type of thing. And again some people may do it for selfish reasons. Some people may do it because you got a team, so, I got a team. There's a lot of reasons why people give and you know and so on and so forth. But for the most part, I think they give because it's a program that you can see immediate results to the program. Ah, it's a fun type program and you can see where they dollars are going. (Personal interview 1996)

The Chicago program clearly represented huge changes in the organization and conduct of a Midnight Basketball League. How did Standifer, its founder but also the architect of a much simpler concept for the league, react to the glitzy Chicago version? According to Burks, when Standifer came to see the kick-off for the Chicago program, he was so impressed that he began directing to them all inquiries about how to set-up new MBLs. Consequently, Chicago gained the reputation as the training center for how to organize and run the program.

Further, the relationship that developed between Standifer and the Chicago chapter apparently was close. Frank Burks characterized the relationship as being "like family," commenting: "We had a good relationship then, and he took Gil and I

as mentors, and he didn't consult no one before he spoke with us about the Midnight Basketball. If you came, you had to come through us" (Personal interview 1996). According to Walker, "Mr. Standifer was my surrogate father, my surrogate coach. When Mr. Van Standifer was alive, it's like, hey Gil, help me do this. He say, 'cause you got the energy, you got the juice. Ok, and I'm his boy" (Personal interview 1996).

In addition to Chicago establishing its own league, 1989 also witnessed the beginning of talks for an Atlanta league. Former Atlanta Hawk, Clifford Iverson, met with then Mayor Andrew Young to discuss support for establishing the league. Iverson met twice with Mayor Young and was not able to secure a financial commitment. However, Iverson went to Reebok and was able to get enough money to start a league. Hence, in 1990, Midnight Basketball leagues were operating in the cities of Glenarden, Chicago, and Atlanta. The media coverage of the program spread to a national level. Despite the lack of official study, the program was portrayed as a way to combat crime and violence. By 1991, 52 cities had entered into a licensing agreements with Midnight Basketball. Chicago had 8 teams with over 100 members.

In addition, New York City began its efforts to organize the private and public support needed to get the Midnight Basketball League started. According to Ed Lally, executive director of New York Midnight Basketball League, the primary issue facing New York is getting the business community personally and financially involved: "The first thing I'm trying to do is get support of the business community, the accent on this will be the private sector, though we'll also try to go for federal funding" (Kaplan, New York Tribune 1991:6). Having the personal and financial

support of the business community will be a plus for the target group Lally hopes to be able to reach through Midnight Basketball: "The target group for the league is kids who are dropouts, and others who don't have jobs" (Kaplan, New York Tribune 1991:6).

This flurry of activity and media exposure brought the program to the attention of Representative Pat Schroeder, D-Colorado. Schroeder, who was chairing the House Committee for Youth, Children, and Families, came to Chicago to talk with Standifer and Walker after seeing them on Good Morning America. After visiting with Standifer and Walker and seeing the program for herself, Schroeder was convinced that this was a program that was working. She also became convinced of the program's need for additional funding and set out to persuade Congress to fund it. Schroeder explained her position, stating:

> What happened when there was an economic down turn a lot of the companies that were giving them the little bit of money to keep it running. But the community people who were kicking in money then didn't have the money to kick in. So when you needed it the most it was getting shut down. So they came and said, we really think this is one of the best crime prevention programs ever. They tried it in Baltimore, it worked the same way, they tried it in several other cities, it worked the same way. So for just a very little bit of money if you can get volunteers in these cities, wow you can really have somethin' goin. (Video presentation 1997)

However, it was the "1000 Points of Light" initiative – an attempt by then-President George Bush to identify one-thousand successful efforts to solve social ills without the use of public funds – which gave Midnight Basketball both national legitimacy and credibility. On April 12, 1991, President Bush announced MBL as his 124th Point of Light. Interestingly, MBL now had attracted attention and praise from both Democrats and Republicans, albeit for different reasons. Both parties, however,

highlighted the crime-fighting issue. The former saw MBL as a crime-fighting program deserving of public funding, the latter as an example of how to combat community ills without public funds.

For example, President Bush's proclamation recognized MBL as a nationally recognized model program for helping fight drug abuse and crime. In his address to the crowd gathered at the Hyattsville Community Center, the President stated:

> The last thing Midnight Basketball is about is basketball...it's about providing opportunity for young adults to escape drugs and the streets and get on with their lives....It's not coincidental that the crime rate is down 60 percent since this program began. (Wilbon, Washington Post 1991:G9)

The claim that MBL had decreased crime sixty percent became a major selling feature for the program as it moved into the national spotlight. A public service announcement video, created on April 8, 1991, by Saatchi and Saatchi Advertising for the 1000 Points of Light Foundation propagated the claim. Now TV anchors, newspaper reporters, and political figures made the association repeatedly. Perhaps the source of the sixty-percent statistic was an earlier 1989 segment of "Over The Edge." In that newscast, reporter Barry Noland declared that there were 1,911 crimes in Glenarden Maryland in 1986, and that the number had declined sixty percent since the start of Midnight Basketball. The Over The Edge segment also included a statement by police officer Morris Lewis:

> The Midnight Basketball Program, ah, I feel has had a significant impact on the decrease in crime simply because, during a period of time, a group of people are under the watchful eye of League organizers and spectators. Hence, they could not be somewhere committing crimes during that period of time. (Video presentation 1989)

In contrast, Midnight Basketball organizers themselves never made such a

claim specifically or else understated it carefully. For example, at an awards ceremony in Washington D.C., about that time, Standifer stated that the primary focus of the program was to "slow down" the transition from "being high-risk" to "actually in the criminal justice system" (Video presentation 1991).

The fanfare from the Points of Light designation boosted Midnight Basketball's reputation as a crime prevention program, and it quickly witnessed its largest increase in licensing agreements for new leagues. During the last half of 1991, leagues were established in Beloit, Wisconsin, Cleveland, Ohio, Melbourne, Florida, and San Francisco, California. In 1992, MBL increased its members to include Bridgeport, Connecticut, Miami, Florida., Michigan City, Indiana., and Ware County, Georgia.

The 1992 season also provided an unexpected organizational turning point. On September 17, 1992, G. Van Standifer died of a heart attack in the basement office of his home. The sudden and unexpected death of Standifer introduced uncertainty and changes in leadership for the program. According to Gil Walker, MBL's leaders were left momentarily with the question of who would now guide the overall program. Some in-fighting ensued. Walker states: "I've had some problems with his family, his sons and so forth and so on, all that kind of stuff because his daddy treated me like a son. Ok, so, but we working through that" (Personal interview 1996).

Standifer's death facilitated a new organizational structure. According to Walker, the structure was not really new, but was something that he and Standifer had been working on since 1989. Walker states:

> Even though we started [Midnight Basketball] in 1986, we started in 1989. That means because we never had any funds if you will for the most part. Everyone was left to their own devices. We still kind of struggling. But once we get the one or two national sponsors at a million dollars a year, then we got the infrastructure in place right now. Then it changes things, because if we going to do it nationally, then we got to divide the country regional and that's done. Now we got to hire regional coordinators if you will. Those regional coordinators got to have a budget to go to the various cities in their regions and meet with their folks to ensure that things are happening so forth and so on, dot dot. (Personal interview 1996)

The proposed national structure of Midnight Basketball was much like that of the NBA, which is exactly what Walker had instituted in the Chicago leagues. However, it was not until 1993 that the proposed structure took shape. Even though the founder had died, Martha, his widow, and sons, Eric and Nelson and daughter-in-law, Karen were determined to keep the memory of the founder alive through the program. Nelson and wife Karen took over as the directors of the Glenarden MBL.

The family also played a prominent role in the actual construction of the national organization. Soon after Standifer's death the family put together a board of directors to try to guide the program. Martha Standifer assumed the position of chairperson. She is by most accounts the "Mama" of Midnight Basketball and is the one person Van Standifer trusted to tell the truth about his vision. A very personable and outgoing woman, she has a politician's way of personally greeting persons, remembering the smallest details, and making them feel as though they were part of her family. Eric Standifer, the eldest son, assumed the role of President. The other board members included Gil Walker, Vice President, David Sylvester, Secretary, Leon Reid, Treasurer, Jeff Beck, Board Member, and Larry Gray, Board Member. Walker also served as the league's national commissioner. Since Eric resided in San Francisco, the Board of Directors decided that San Francisco would be the

headquarters for the National Association of Midnight Basketball. According to Frank Burks, this is how the national office operates:

> Say that's just like, say, the NBA. They got a national headquarters in New York, same as the president just like in the Midnight Basketball, our office in California....In order for you to be part of the Midnight, you have to gain membership, and so [we] scrutinize you to a certain degree to see if you're worthy and you explain what you want to do, and providing that you follow these Midnight Basketball rules and regulations. See [we] have guidelines, same as the NBA, to gain entrance. (Personal interview 1996)

With the national office in place and a board of directors in control of the league's destiny, MBL had the infrastructure in place to move to a national level.

The league continued to grow, adding Antioch, California., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania., Houston, Texas., and Richmond, Virginia., in the 1993 season. During this season MBL also came to the attention of political officials in the state of New York. In October of 1993, Governor Mario Cuomo sent a memo to Mike Klein, his regional representative in New York City, after reading an article about a Midnight Basketball program in Camden, New Jersey. Klein was a life-long resident of New York City and the founder of a nonprofit organization that used donations from corporations to restore neighborhood parks and school yards. According to Klein, the memo read: "What is this? Why are they referring to Midnight Basketball as an anti-crime program with this thing. Crime is a serious issue, basketball is a game. Why are they mixing the two? Figure it out and get back to me" (Personal interview 1995).

Klein went to work on checking out the Governor's request. He wanted to know if anyone in New York had ever thought of even playing basketball at

midnight. He found former NBA star and Hall of Famer, Nate "Tiny" Archibald, who according to Klein, ran a similar program twenty-five years ago:

> They were doing midnight basketball before it was ever called Midnight Basketball, in a gym that was assessable, bolted, locked, and safe for particular people in there. And the lessons perfectly were, you know, was based much more on basketball back then, but it was all about staying away from the guys on the corner, staying away from, from all the elements that are around you, the gym was a safe haven. (Personal interview 1995)

The Governor's directive also led Klein to visit the city of Chicago and talk with Gil Walker. After program review and consultation, Governor Cuomo decided to adopt MBL program on a statewide basis and introduced it on January 5, 1994, in his "Governor's Message to the Legislature." On May 4, 1994, Governor Cuomo announced that Midnight Basketball leagues would begin that summer in Buffalo, New York City, and Syracuse. According to Klein, the thing that captured Governor Cuomo's attention was the link between the program and crime. Governor Cuomo commented in an interview: "As an avid basketball player, I understand the purpose of the game to help people develop team spirit, discipline, and a good work ethic" (Midnight Basketball League National Newsletter 1994:1).

The announcement of a city-wide program established in New York City was another first for MBL. Governor Mario Cuomo appointed Klein to serve as the executive director of the New York state program. Klein assembled a staff to run the New York State Midnight Basketball program: Reggie Magwood, a former case management counselor from the New York State Division for Youth and LeRoy Hendricks, a former New York Police Officer and Detective with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) were both appointed Commissioner; Michael Harrigan, Director of Case Management for New York City Department of Juvenile Justice, as

Director of Education and Workshops; and Edwin Genece, the Director of Public Affairs for the New York State, as Director of Communications.

The difference between the New York programs and other programs in the league centered around the point of origin. In the case of New York the program began in the Governor's Office. The workshop aspect of the program was also different. Under the New York system, workshops ran from 8:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. every night and were mandatory. According to Klein:

> The program for us was going to be more than opening a gymnasium. We talked it a little on the phone, the workshop component, for us from 8:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. every night before the game, [was] mandatory. It is mandatory for all participants to attend these workshops in order to play the basketball part, something that a lot of these folks usually miss, you know, basketball is strictly a night that in itself you know is trying to deter clients and keep people occupied. That's the big picture. (Personal interview 1995)

The season for the program ran from early May until the end of September.

The mission statement for the program focused upon anti-crime, job development and community development. In a profile by Sheila Mckenna in New York Newsday, Klein explained who the program targeted:

> Midnight Basketball saves lives in a very graphic form. Law enforcement is one of our biggest boosters and the reason is because our formula is simple: We're getting people who are more likely to be victims, rather than perpetrators, off the streets and into more positive activities. We do that through mandatory workshops and increasing skills, as well as making every effort to connect them with jobs. (1995:C1)

In an attempt to explain the benefit of the workshop aspect of the program and its dual purpose, Klein comments:

> What we do for our workshop is we want our workshop instructor to become involved with the young people, be it taking them to their office, you know, some type of job training on site, some sorta exposure beyond the neighborhood. Um, I think one of your demographics of most of the folks

> who are in Midnight Basketball is that they just have not been exposed to the outside world, outside twenty-thirty blocks from where they live and that's not uncommon, you know. We have a junior program in New York City. There's a program called the Fresh Air Fund, which is prestigious, you know, to go up-state to spend a week in the country. The Fresh Air Fund means that they know kids never get to leave their neighborhood till they are ten or twelve. So all we're doing is catching them at seventeen and eighteen and they still haven't left their neighborhood and been exposed to jobs, opportunity, and the things that are out there besides the corner deli. That's not, that's the only job available sometimes, um or the corner whatever could be a liquor store. Um, exposure is probably the underlying, you know, element of Midnight Basketball that you're trying to do. It's not in your mission statement, you know, your mission statement is anti-crime, is job skills development, self-esteem development, and those things take place in the center, but by choosing the people that are going to do the instruction and spend time in those centers we get to achieve the other thing, you know, the exposure happens. (Personal interview 1995)

The New York City league had 48 teams in six different leagues. Games were played at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, Roberto Clemente State Park in the Bronx, the Future Vision Beacon School in Queens, and Riverbank, which was the site of the first league and the largest single site with 160 men and 80 women (Forero, New York Newsday 1994).

Elsewhere, the 1994 season was a political roller-coaster for MBL. On March 31, 1994, the Senate and House of Representatives passed the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act." Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, sponsored the bill along with Senator Carol Moseley-Braun. According to Frank Burks, the idea of reintroducing Midnight Basketball as a program funded by the Congress was the idea of Gil Walker, Hank Clark, and himself:

> We had some friends that knew her [Senator Braun], and my friend is a coach. We got a holt of her, and plus Bobby Russell is a friend of mine. Tell him about bring that deal back up about Midnight Basketball and they did. But Pat Schroeder was first encouraging because it didn't just get there. It been there for about six years when they brought it in because we came up here [Washington, D.C.] and she came to the Midnight Basketball where we was

> at that night, and that was just it, you know. We got Carol and Bobby, said they brought it back up to her and we had to go to Washington and testify. (Personal interview 1996)

The Goals 2000 bill was designed to meet the national education initiative calling for a ninety-percent increase in the graduation rates across the nation (U.S. Senate, Congressional Records 1995:S3863). Section 1052 of the Bill, "Grants for Midnight Basketball League Training and Partnership Program," amended section 520 of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 11903a) specifically to cover public housing programs as well as youth programs not in public housing. It also set specific guidelines for the evaluation and distribution of funds. According to Gil Walker, the bill was a financial success:

> We funded a bill called the Midnight Basketball Youth Training and Partnership Act which was a $5.6 million dollar bill. Funding came through with that bill and that type of thing, ok. Ah, Republicans went in office, Kemp, who was head of Housing at that time, came to our opening ceremony and saw how wonderful it is and came up with what they call youth sports grants where you can get up to125 thousand dollars and that was a type of million dollars in doing that. (Personal interview 1996)

The major connection to Midnight Basketball and the Goals 2000 Act focused upon the workshop component of the program. The workshops were to be coupled with the counseling by program leaders to provide program participants with access to positive role models and leaders of the community (Midnight Basketball League Newsletter 1994:4). On the Senate floor Senator Moseley-Braun gave a moving testament to the transforming power of the program by relating her own experience in a similar program:

> The Midnight Basketball program essentially uses basketball as an opportunity, an opportunity to provide tutoring, an opportunity to provide counseling, an opportunity to show youth and young adults that they have other options than being out on the streets.

> Mr. President, I was a dropout for awhile in my young life. I managed to get a job working in public housing projects which was considered to be a very good job at the time.
>
> But my role was to supervise young people in a program that was much like the Midnight Basketball program. I was a supervisor, but I guess by osmosis, the message that was being communicated to these young people spilled over to me. As a result I was then convinced that it did make sense to go back to school; it did make sense to try to reach broader horizons; it did make sense to try to make something of myself, it did make sense to try to give something back to my community. (Sen. Moseley-Braun, Congressional Record 1994:S715-16)

Prior to the Goals 2000 legislation there were two other pieces of legislation presented to Congress which held hopes of financial benefit for Midnight Basketball programs. On March 15, 1994 Representative George Miller (D-Calif.) introduced the Urban Recreation and At Risk Youth Act. In his opening statement, Miller argued that this act addressed the preventive side of crime by providing young people with constructive, supportive alternatives to street life and gangs (Rep. Miller, Congressional Record, 1994:E433). The act expanded the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Act's focus by targeting urban neighborhoods with high crime rates and allowing innovative program grants to continue beyond the first year. Miller noted that the impetus for this act came from the hearing he held as chairman of the Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. There he had noticed one commonalty time and time again, namely, that most of these young people had little opportunity for constructive activity in their neighborhoods and their cities. Miller also noted in his extended remarks:

Accessible, well-maintained neighborhood park are focal points of community pride and a place for youth to learn. Deteriorating parks are breeding grounds for

crime and youth gangs and a visible symbol that nobody cares. (Rep. Miller, Congressional Record 1994: E433)

Secondly, Representative Donald Payne (D-N.J.) introduced the Youth Development Block Grant on March 17, 1994. The primary focus of Payne's initiative was to provide community-based organizations the funding to serve those in need while helping the community-based programs to coordinate their efforts. However, unlike Goals 2000, which focused upon education, the link between Midnight Basketball and these two legislative acts was crime prevention.

Although the Training and Partnership Act contained in Goals 2000 contained tremendous financial support for the league, MBL never received the funding. A change in political climate for MBL began to occur. The program which had been a "point of light" for a Republican President now found itself a praised program of a Democratic President at odds with a Republican-controlled Congress. The problem, according to Walker, was not the program but rather how the program was being portrayed. Walker states:

> But the education bill got killed in a filibuster in, ah, Congress. I mean the President signed off on it and everything. Then he wanted to reintroduce it, so he put it in the crime bill. Well, I didn't like that because now Midnight Basketball is associated with crime, stopping violence and our program does not stop crime. I can't walk in no community and people killing each other and say, I got Midnight Basketball, and the killin' goin' stop. That's a police problem and I'm not a policeman. I'm in the prevention business, I'm saying that if kids are involved in the Midnight Basketball league I don't care how many prisons you build. Build all across the city if you want to. If a guy has the right constitution, his character is intact. Now that's what I'm teaching out here. Any case, they thought we could get some money quicker by putting it in the crime bill. So what happened, the Republicans, it don't make sense, we should build prisons, we shouldn't be doing basketball programs to stop crime. (Personal interview 1996)

During the Congressional debates about the program Representative Rosa Delauro (R-Conn.) pointed out her reservations with the crime bill and its broad focus:

> Our children do not need Midnight Basketball, our children do not need more sensitivity training. Our children need law enforcement, good jurisdiction, imprisonment for criminals and safety on their streets. (Rep. Delauro, Congressional Record 1994:7948)

The change from being associated with education to crime from a political standpoint challenged the perception of the program. President Clinton's crime bill, known as the "Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994," included in its title III provisions for the Department of Justice to issue grants to nonprofit organization for projects that provided residential services to youth who are at-risk. Title III also amended the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act of 1978 to establish an at-risk recreation grants program (Public Law 103.322 1994:170). The crime bill proposed almost $7 billion dollars for crime prevention, with Midnight Basketball receiving about $40 million dollars. Some members of Congress interpreted the provision for crime prevention programs and its specific reference to Midnight Basketball as duplications of programs already in existence. Representative Bill Goodling (R-Penn.) stated:

> I am not opposed to providing targeted assistance to youth in neighborhoods with high incidence of crime and poverty, yet I am opposed to creating duplicative programs. I strongly believe there should be linkages between what we are doing in the area of crime prevention, employment, and education and training if we are to be successful in salvaging this nation's youth. However, in creating these linkages, we must build on existing programs, establishing a comprehensive system of assistance, not a series of fragmented Federal programs through which millions of limited dollars are wasted on duplicative administrative structures. In fact, the GAO recently identified 154 Federal programs that in some capacity provide job training and assistance to disadvantaged adults and youth through a wide variety of delivery

mechanisms. (Rep. Goodling, Congressional Record 1994:H2342)

However, duplicate programs were not the center of congressional debates regarding the crime bill. At the heart of the Congressional debates regarding the crime bill was the proposed social spending for prevention programs, notably Midnight Basketball, and the bill's ban of 29 types of assault weapons (Forero, New York Newsday 1994). These issues divided Democrats and Republicans. On the Democratic side House Speaker Thomas Foley (D-Wa.) opposed the ban on assault weapons while fellow Representative Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.) was in favor of the ban. Representative Lamar Smith (R-Tx.) summed up the view of most Republicans regarding Midnight Basketball in the crime bill, referencing it as "vague social spending:"

> Over $9 billion is included for vague social spending to finance such stringent anticrime measures as arts and crafts, self-esteem enhancement, dance, and midnight basketball. All this on the theory that the person who stole your car, robbed your house, and assaulted your family was no more than a disgruntled artist or would be NBA star. (Rep. Smith, Congressional Record, 1994:H7945)

Special interest groups were also heavily involved in the crime bill debates and some took an active role in turning Midnight Basketball into the Willie Horton of the Crime Bill. According to Youth Today journalist Alan Vanneman:

> The right wing took a program created by volunteers in black neighborhoods to give their young men a sense of community and responsibility and turned it into a symbol of "wild in the streets" hooliganism that was used to terrify the white suburban middle class. Part of the campaign was orchestrated by Craig Shirley & Associates, a Republican PR firm that, according to founder Craig Shirley, brought together an ad hoc coalition against the crime bill "as part of what we do for a number of clients, including the American Conservative Union, the National Rifle Association and the law enforcement Association of America. (Vanneman, Youth Today 1994:40)

The National Rifle Association (NRA) joined in the attack on the crime bill

and Midnight Basketball and quickly made its presence known. In April of 1994, the NRA ran a full page advertisement in USA Today attacking Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), referring to him as a "criminals' best friend in Congress." The ad claimed that Schumer's crime bill took $8 billion away from prisons and gave it away to increase "the self-esteem of young criminals and to pay for midnight basketball leagues." The ad went on to urge voters to tell Congress that they want a crime bill with $8 billions for prisons or they don't want a crime bill at all" (Vanneman, Youth Today 1994:33). Other attacks were directed specifically at Midnight Basketball. The Cato Institute's Stephen Moore wrote a public opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal in which he referred to the whole bill as "a $30 billion waste" and stated particular disgust for the $50 million for Midnight Sports Programs. According to Moore: "Presumably kids are supposed to get out of bed in the middle of the night to go play basketball so they won't get involved in crime" (Moore, Wall Street Journal 1994:A16).

The NRA's involvement did not go unnoticed by members of Congress. Representative Herb Klein (D-N.J.) charged the NRA with attempting to hold the crime bill hostage:

> But special interests would hold this crime bill hostage in a desperate attempt to kill a ban on military-style assault weapons that are the weapons of choice of drug dealers and criminals. We must not bow to special interest. We cannot let children die on the streets to appease the N.R.A. (Rep. Klein, Congressional Record 1994:H7948)

Representative Mel Reynolds (D-Ill.) later noted:

> Make no mistake about it Mr. Speaker, the forces of the National Rifle Association are hard at work to defeat the toughest crime bill this Congress has ever passed. The N.R.A. has once again shown its true colors in this

debate. Don't be fooled, my colleagues. The N.R.A. is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

They obviously are not for tough crime measures, because this bill has them. They wanted more police on the street, and this bill 100,000 of them. They wanted tough three strikes and you're out law, and this bill has one. They advocated spending $8 billion for more prisons. This bill would spend $8.5 billion.

No, Mr. Speaker, the N.R.A is only interested in the proliferation of assault weapons. That must be true because the Congress delivered on the other tough crime measures they supported, and yet the N.R.A. is dead set against this bill. (Rep. Reynolds, Congressional Records 1994:H7955)

As the crime bill debates and concerns made the news, many people began to get a very controversial image of Midnight Basketball. When New York Times reporter Sam Verhovek visited with Oklahoma residents regarding the bill, he found that many considered the $40 million dollars set aside for late-night sports league a payment to convicted criminals. Others like Alabama Representative Terry Everett (R- Ala.) felt the program was flawed in its logic:

Forty million dollars for midnight basketball. There are those in this Congress who actually want to spend $40 million to keep teenagers out after midnight to play basketball. That's not going to halt crime--that's going to increase crime What kind of logic keeps teenagers on the streets until well after midnight? Midnight basketball is bad and it's ugly, Mr. Speaker. (Rep. Everett, Congressional Records 1994:H7950).

Daily Oklahoman reporter Clara Hinton pointed out another concern regarding the program during an interview with Rick Romain, Oklahoma City's MBL Program Coordinator. Hinton reported:

Romain said some people had the idea that since most of the participants are black, the program would only be offered in northeast Oklahoma City. But the practices and conflict resolution classes are held at community centers and sites in different sections of the city [Romain said]. There are several white and Hispanic youths in the program. (Hinton, Daily Oklahoman 1994:7)

While the majority of the debates of the crime bill regarding race centered

around the deletion of the Racial Justice Act, its concerns spilled over into the Midnight Basketball issues as well. The notions regarding the racial composition of the participants in the program became a major point of contention in the Congressional debates. Princeton Professor John Diiulio pointed out to Congress that in fact there is a growing juvenile problem with surprising racial implications:

> America is facing a ticking youth crime bomb. We have burgeoning numbers of young people who, from all statistical profiles, are at risk of becoming violent and repeat criminals. The rate of growth on serious crime among white teenagers now exceeds the rate of growth in serious youth crime among black and Hispanic teenagers. Now, given this reality, you might think that this bill would address the problem of juvenile crime in a serious way. But I would submit to you that it does not, not even symbolically. (Prof. Diiulio, Congressional Record 1994:H7944)

According to Frank Burks, all this debating and name calling stem from the identification of MBL with young minority inner city youth: "Newt Gingritch called it pork and they wanted to cut it out cause it wasn't going to no white kids, it was going to the black community" (Personal interview 1996).

Though the Midnight Basketball component of the crime bill found many critics and points of caution, it also had staunch supporters who had witnessed the programs appeal and success. For example, Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) stated:

> In the Western Addition, a predominantly African American community, the Ella Hill Hutch Community center has a midnight basketball program that is taking nearly 100 young men--disadvantaged, unemployed, and at risk--and giving them a second chance at education and employment. Recently, at a nationwide conference on midnight sports, the Ella Hutch basketball program was heralded as a model for the nation. In the Mission District, the heart of San Francisco's Latino community, the Columbia Parks Boys Club and the YMCA are sponsoring "Midnight Soccer" for young men and women, and working actively to break the rising cycle of gang violence that is threatening the lives of so many young people. By combining education, job training, peer counseling, and the discipline and enjoyment of sport, these two

> programs--midnight basketball and midnight soccer--are already making a valuable contribution to crime prevention and, more important, helping young people lead productive lives. The money earmarked in the crime bill for midnight sports is an investment that is more than justified by the results. (Rep. Pelosi, Congressional Record 1994:H7955-56)

The $33 billion dollar crime bill put forth in a procedural motion in the House of Representatives on August 11, 1994, was defeated by a vote of 225-210. In an effort to get the bill passed, modifications were made to toughen a provision on sex offenders, shift money from crime prevention programs to law enforcement, and allow for some administrative review before new restrictions on assault weapons took effect (Diamond, San Francisco Examiner 1994:A-14). On August 21, 1994, the House passed a new configuration of the crime bill with a vote of 235 to 195. And on August 25, 1994, the bill passed the Senate with a vote of 61 to 38 (TIME 1994:23).

Although the bill had changed significantly from its original form, White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers stated that President Clinton remained committed to four key points contained in the bill: the ban on 19 assault weapons, life imprisonment for three time violent offenders, money for crime prevention programs, and funds for hiring 100,000 new police officers (Diamond, John, San Francisco Examiner 1994:A-14).

To date, Midnight Basketball programs have not received any of the federal monies which were proposed in legislation. Gil Walker maintains that MBL continues to function mainly from individual and corporate sponsorship. However, whether one believes the program to be a positive alternative or just political pork, a true measure of the program and its social implications are in the deeds and actions of

its participants. Many MBL participants have gone back to complete high school and gone on to pursue degrees in higher education. Overall, what most participants share is that the program gives a safe place to go and it gives them hope. In the words of three participants:

> This give us something to do and something to look forward to. (Lamont Fulwood; in Brady, USA Today 1994: 2C)

> I like playing the game and it's a decent program, you know. The program is decent you know, it don't be all that arguing, you know. (Anthony Bradley, Personal interview 1996)

> It keeps us as kids thinking and doing something productive instead of out there doing something bad. You don't need a gun to shoot basketball. (Elvis Promells; in Katz, New York Times 1989:51)

Lamont Fulwood, Anthony Bradley and Elvis Promells are young men who are making Midnight Basketball work for them. Lamont Fulwood is an 18-year-old high school graduate in technical school, learning to be a mechanic (Bradey, USA Today 1994:2C). Bradley is a 25-year-old native of Chicago who has never missed a Midnight Basketball game in four years and in 1996 traveled for the first time out of his Chicago neighborhood to Washington D.C. to take part in the Midnight Basketball championship game. Promells, a 21-year-old who has used his Midnight Basketball skills to help him in his office-cleaning service. According to Promells, "It really teaches you how to cooperate, how to get along with people" (Katz, New York Times 1989:51).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

The narrative provides a description of the origins of Midnight Basketball and the forms it has taken from 1986 to 1994. It comprises the raw data for this dissertation. However, these data require analysis because to the reader these data imply a causal sequence which may or may not hold true (Griffin 1993:1100). According to Griffin (1993:1100) narratives must be "unpacked" and analytically reconstructed to build a replicable causal interpretation of historical events. This process recognizes that any event in a narrative has antecedent events which, by virtue of their location in the time sequence, appear to have had effects on subsequent events. Some sort of analysis is required to separate out those events that are causal from those that are meaningful but spurious. It is at this point that knowledge of the events' temporal order becomes invaluable, for it allows the analyst to begin an inquiry into the causal relations of events.

Establishing causation for a narrative is methodologically slippery and requires an extensive use of theoretical reasoning . The strategy, however, is simple. The analysis proceeds by taking events antecedent to a particular event and asking two questions: 1) would this outcome have occurred in the absence of this antecedent event; and 2) what would the outcome have been if a specific antecedent event had not occurred; and This "what if" strategy is known as counter-factual reasoning. The analyst poses "what if" questions because concrete events are typically part of multiple processes, some of which are more central than others. This allows the analyst to conceptually isolate and abstract facts from historical sequence and ask if

their absence or modification would have altered the course of the event as it was narrated (Griffin 1993:1101). A "yes" response to the question classifies the event as both essential to the historical configuration as it actually happened and a significant historical cause of what followed (Weber 1949:166,171,180). Counter-factuals aid the analyst in understanding what happened and why it happened the way it did through the process of revealing what could happen and why it did not happen (Moore 1978; Zeitlin 1984).

The use of counter-factuals was recently illustrated by Griffin in his analysis of a lynching. The strategy consists of reasoning designed to infer which events are causally related to subsequent events described in the narrative. Consider for example figure 1, which depicts the construction of the Midnight Basketball league in Glenarden Maryland. Figure 1A contains a series of prior events. For each event, I ask the question: If a particular prior event had not occurred, would the event under consideration have occurred without the occurrence of that prior event. I use arrows to identify the causal sequence inferred from such counter-factual reasoning.

Glenarden MBL

In Figure 1A the square represents the key event or dependent variable--the first Glenarden MBL-- and the circles represent the events, motivations and actions which serve as key explanatory variables in the initial construction of Midnight Basketball. The perforated lines contain antecedent conditions which represent the counterfactual inquiries. The arrows represent the direction of the causal relationships.

The first variables identified in this diagram are "Standifer in the role of town

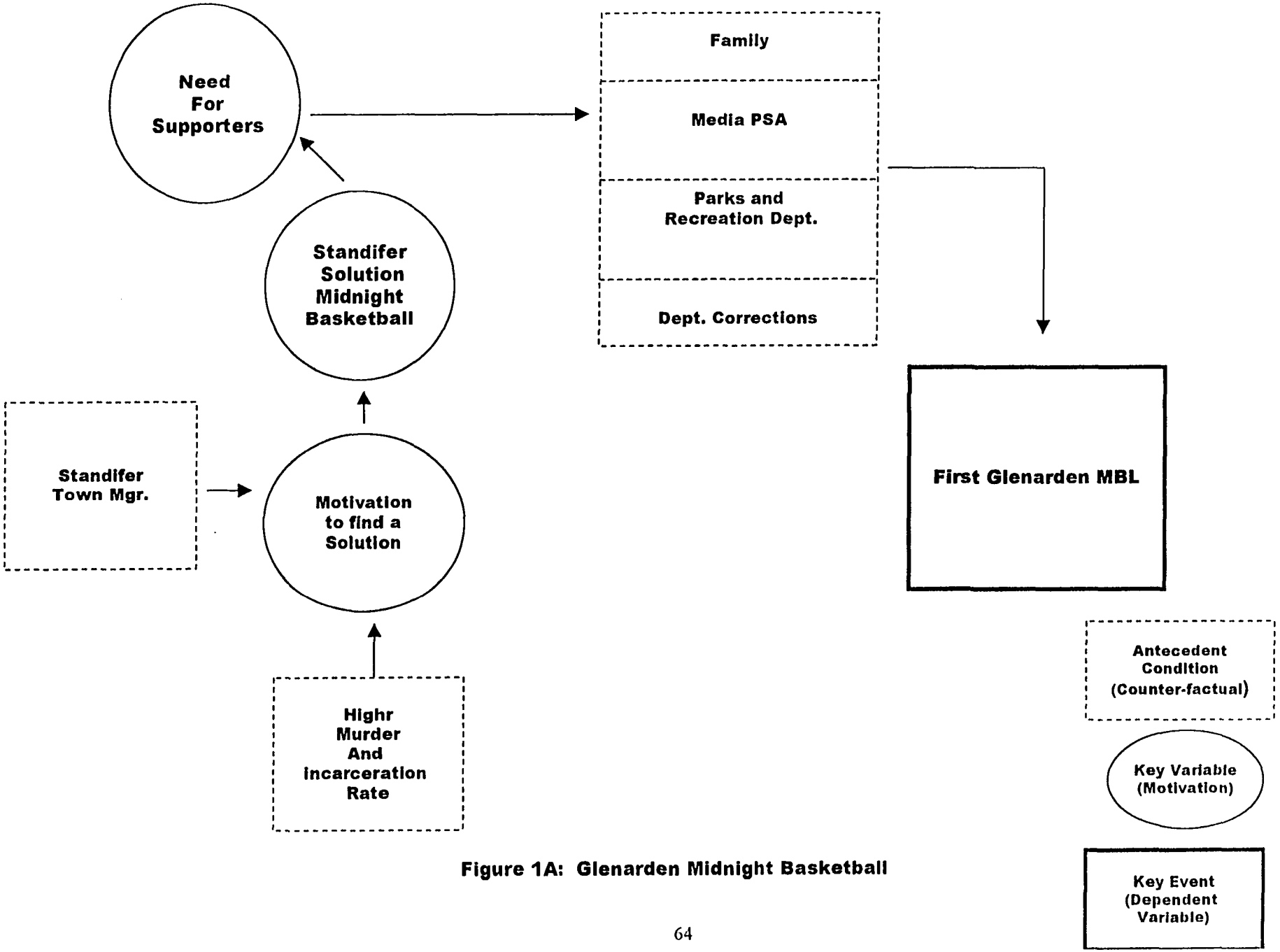

Figure 1A: Glenarden Midnight Basketball

manager" and correspondingly, the "high murder and incarceration rates in Glenarden." The position is key because, had Standifer not been town manager, he would not have discovered the murder and incarceration rates, nor have been in a position to do something about them in an official capacity. Spector and Kitsuse (1983) remind us that problematic conditions in and of themselves do not produce anything; rather problematic conditions may provide interested persons and interest groups the motivation to do something. The discovery of this problematic condition disturbed Standifer as town manager and served as a motivator for him to find a solution. The questions to be asked about this problematic condition are: would Standifer have been aware of this condition had he not been town manager or in a position to do something about it at that time, or, finally, had the crime rate been low, would he have been motivated to do something? Thus, was it just G. Van Standifer average citizen who was concerned or was it G. Van Standifer, town manager who was concerned about the high crime rates? One might argue that had Standifer not been town manager, he would not have come across these murder and incarceration rates. Therefore, the position of Standifer becomes an important element in the establishment of the causal chain of events. Now, it is the town manager who is the interested person, it is the town manager who becomes motivated by the problematic condition. In this case Standifer in his role as town manager, so motivated, literally dreams up Midnight Basketball. After coming up with his solution, Standifer becomes what Spector and Kitsuse refer to as a "claims-maker." Others, such as Hilgartner and Bosk (1988), would refer to him as a "champion" for the cause. He works to institute something called Midnight Basketball. The key variable which

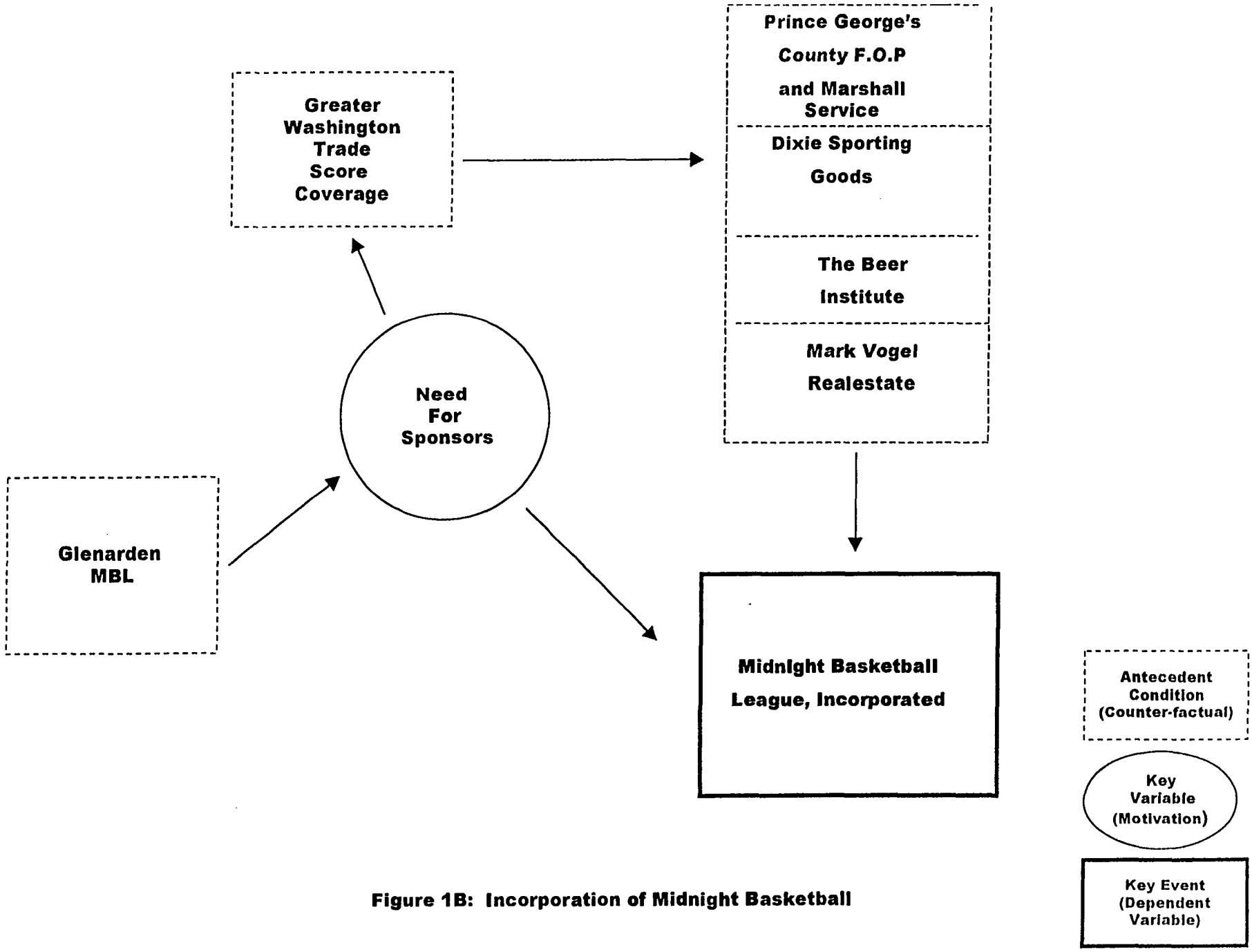

Figure 1B: Incorporation of Midnight Basketball

unites these two independent variables is the motivation to find a solution. This key variable also serves as the initiator of Standifer's claims making activity asserting the existence of a problematic condition and the need to enlist the aid of others. The successful recruitment of his family, Department of Corrections, Parks and Recreation, and local radio stations provide the antecedent conditions necessary to bring about the establishment of the first Midnight Basketball league.

Figure 1B, "The Incorporation of Midnight Basketball," represents the second major event within MBL's social history. The key variable responsible for the steps leading to the incorporation of Midnight Basketball is the need for sponsors. These sponsors were attracted in part by the media coverage of the program. Media coverage from the newspaper, Washington Trade, served as the antecedent condition which made potential sponsors aware of MBL and aroused their interest. This included the Fraternal Order of Police, the Marshall Service, Dixie Sporting Goods, the Beer Institute of America, and businessman Mark Vogel. Counter-factual reasoning suggests that had these sponsors not stepped forward, the Glenarden Midnight Basketball League, which was now called the Midnight Basketball League, Inc., could not afford to continue. Therefore, the securing of support from these entities serves as the necessary antecedent condition making possible the second season of Midnight Basketball in Glenarden, Maryland. The incorporation of MBL in Glenarden marked its transformation from an informal organization to a formal, legal entity.

Theoretical Implications of Figures 1A and 1B

The public arenas model suggests, as its name implies, that certain public

arenas-- the news media, executive and legislative branches of government, the courts, made-for-TV movies, the cinema, political campaign organizations, social action groups, direct mail solicitation, books dealing with social issues, and private foundations-- facilitate the success of some claims-making activity (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988:58-9). The contest among claims makers promoting a variety of worthy causes takes place in the arenas. Public attention directed toward a particular social problem, according to Blumer (1971:300), is determined primarily in terms of how it is defined and conceived in society.

In the case of Midnight Basketball, Standifer used the arena of city government as the area of focus for advancing the claim that high murder and incarceration rates for young African American males between the ages of 18-25 was a problematic condition. The use of the political arena also provided Standifer with the carrying capacity necessary for its growth. Standifer presented his claim in a manner that aligned the issue with an image that played upon the deepest fears of society. Standifer's publicizing of the high murder and incarceration rates in Prince George's County strikes at the heart of all citizens. Citizens typically have a concern and fear about being a victim or having a loved one become a victim or perpetrator of a violent crime. Citizens are also concerned about how their community is perceived by others. Either way, Standifer presented the claim in an arena which appealed to a broader sector of society.

Imagery is also an important part of capturing the attention of the public. The public is highly stimulated by dramatic images. Therefore, social problems that can be presented to the public in a dramatic manner have a higher probability of

successfully competing in the arenas. In all arenas, there is limited space. Therefore, not all deserving social problems actually get acknowledged as social problems. Only those that have garnered the attention of society because of the work of effective champions become known as legitimate "social problems". In the case of Standifer, he was successful in having his claims acknowledged and identified by his society as a social problem.

The credit for having his claim recognized as a social problem was not only the result of the arenas in which it was presented but also a result of the legitimacy of Standifer as a creditable claims maker. Standifer's position as an elected official and public figure--town manger--provided him with the necessary credibility with the public in order to make the claim. This legitimacy also puts Standifer in the position to propose an appropriate solution.

Thus, in accounting for the emergence of Midnight Basketball, Standifer used the motivation to find a solution to the high murder and incarceration rates and institute a basketball league as an alternative to involvement in criminal activity. Basketball became the vehicle that Standifer uses to address the problem. It is at this point that Standifer again engaged in claims-making activity. Here the claims making activity now is directed toward persuading others to support his solution. Once again he used the political arena. This legitimated the claim about a problematic condition and provided a resource for organizing his basketball league.

Within social movements, an intricate part of the movement is the delivery of collective goods or actions, since only a few individuals will bear the costs of working to obtain them. Hence, the explanation of a movement requires detailed

attention to the cost and benefits of participation and analysis which will have different entries and conclusions for different people (Olson 1965). From an organizational point of view, success in attracting members and resources requires a number of tricky procedures. The organization must attract supporters and neutralize or transform a dubious mass and elite public into sympathizers (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1217). In the case of the first Midnight Basketball league, Standifer assembled a cadre of persons based upon their relationship to him personally. He then used his position as town manager to gain access to key government officials and other resources.

Social movement organizations usually begin by someone actually formalizing the arrangement of informal practices of the social movement into identifiable and marketable social goals. An example of this is Standifer's move to incorporate the league, establish set rules and regulations, and adopt a trademark identifying the programs goals. These steps combined take the program from the ranks of social movement to a formal social movement organization.

Chicago MBL

The key antecedent conditions in Figure 2 are the "television coverage of MBL", "Vince Lange's service as the Director of the Chicago Housing Authority," and the "high rates of gang related crime and violence in Chicago." The high rates of gang related crime and violence in the Chicago Housing Units supervised by Lange serve as the motivation for him to find a solution. Again, it was not Lange, average citizen, but Lange, the Director of The Chicago Housing Authority, who is motivated to find a solution. The television program about Midnight Basketball, coupled with

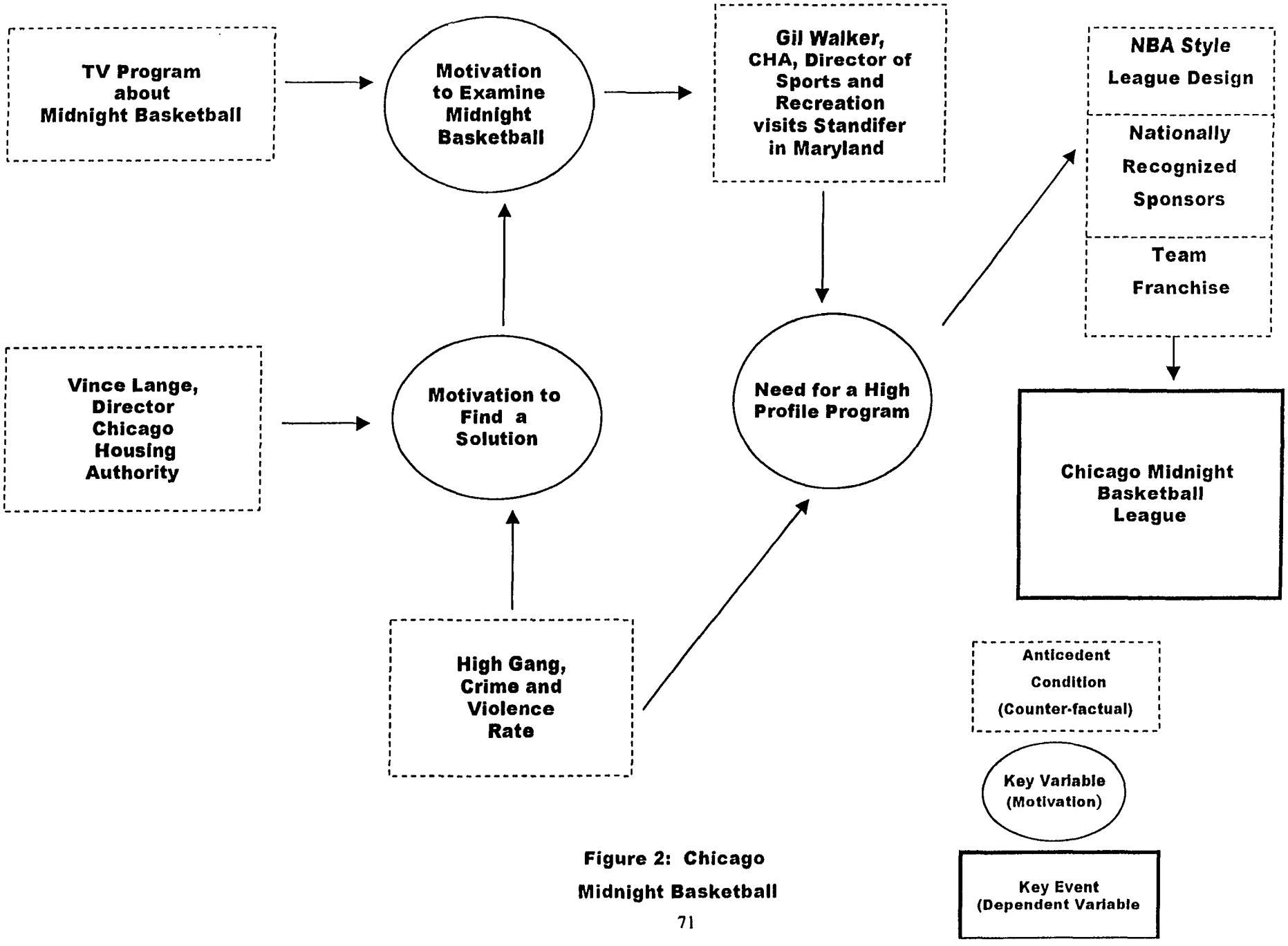

Figure 2: Chicago Midnight Basketball

Lange's need to find a solution, serve as the antecedent conditions which inspire Lange to send Gil Walker, Director of Sports and Recreation Programs, to Glenarden, Maryland, to find out about the program from Standifer. Gil Walker's visit to Glenarden to speak with Standifer and the high gang related crime and violence rates lead to another key variable, "the motivation to construct a high profile program in Chicago." Hence, Walker and his staff designed a league modeled after the National Basketball Association (NBA). They solicited sponsors and franchised league teams to bring about the first Chicago Midnight Basketball League. This league was different from Glenarden leagues developed by Standifer—Chicago developed an NBA version of MBL. As sponsors bought into the concept and provided the cash, players in Chicago MBL were decked out in expensive basketball shoes, gym clothes, and received expensive equipment bags. Walker and his staff added their high dollar innovations to meet what they perceived to be the special needs of the Chicago environment.

Theoretical Implications of Figure 2

Establishing the Chicago League marked a major turning point in the organizational structure of Midnight Basketball programs. Chicago was the second official Midnight Basketball program and it was the first out of state program to be established. In addition, the Chicago support base for its program was different from the Glenarden program. Chicago's program was operationalized and financed by the Chicago Housing Authority. The Glenarden program was independent and was supported through private enterprise. Chicago also utilized private enterprise but in the form of corporate sponsorship and franchising. This multi-model support system

afforded a more high profile program in Chicago than that found in Glenarden.

The organizational changes that occurred as a result of the Chicago program centered around the source of program support and sponsorship. This resulted in changes in the program's image and focus. The program was not just an "alternative to gangs and violence." They were now competing with the gangs and criminal activity for the attention of the participants. Before Midnight Basketball was established in Chicago those who really did not want to be involved in crime and gangs had no other options. However, the Chicago MBL program focused upon fostering in participants the same type of pride and recognition a youth might get from being involved in crime and gangs, albeit with a more positive message.

With respect to resource mobilization, the supporters attracted to the Chicago program were not solely financial contributors. Many had a great amount of compassion and concern for the young people the program was trying to help. Some supporters participated more so because they had always wanted to own a basketball team: maybe they thought it was good advertisement for their product, or maybe it was a matter of keeping up with the Joneses. Resource mobilization theorists note that those individuals who provide money, facilities, and labor often have no commitment to the values upon which the specific goals of the movement are based.

Chicago's proficiency in organization not only propelled the program into more than a single social movement organization, but also made it part of a social movement industry. From the standpoint of theory, the shift from a social movement organization to a social movement industry involves the establishment of networks

between the movement and broader entities such as the Chicago Housing Authority and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

MBL Reorganization

Organizational transformation involves changes in the fundamental nature of the organization in relation to its ecosystem and requires completely new ways of thinking, behaving, and perceiving by members of the organization (Fletcher, 1990). For Midnight Basketball, its organizational transformation occurred in September of 1992 when the founder, G. Van Standifer, died. Standifer's death set the stage for a radical change in the direction of the program.

Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between Standifer's death and subsequent organizational changes in the Midnight Basketball program. Standifer's death served as the antecedent condition which caused a split between the Standifer family and the Midnight Basketball affiliates over the purpose and goals of the program. The key variable motivating the family was the "family's need to preserve, and perhaps control, what they saw as the legacy of Standifer." This prompted the family's involvement in the selection of a MBL board of directors. The "need to maintain organizational control" was the key variable motivating Midnight Basketball affiliates to become involved in the selection of a new board of directors. The establishment of the board of directors served as the antecedent condition necessary to bring about the dependent variable, the National Association of Midnight Basketball. The establishment of a National Association of Midnight Basketball in turn served as the third key event in the history of Midnight Basketball. Formation of the National Association made possible the appointment of Eric Standifer as President and, since

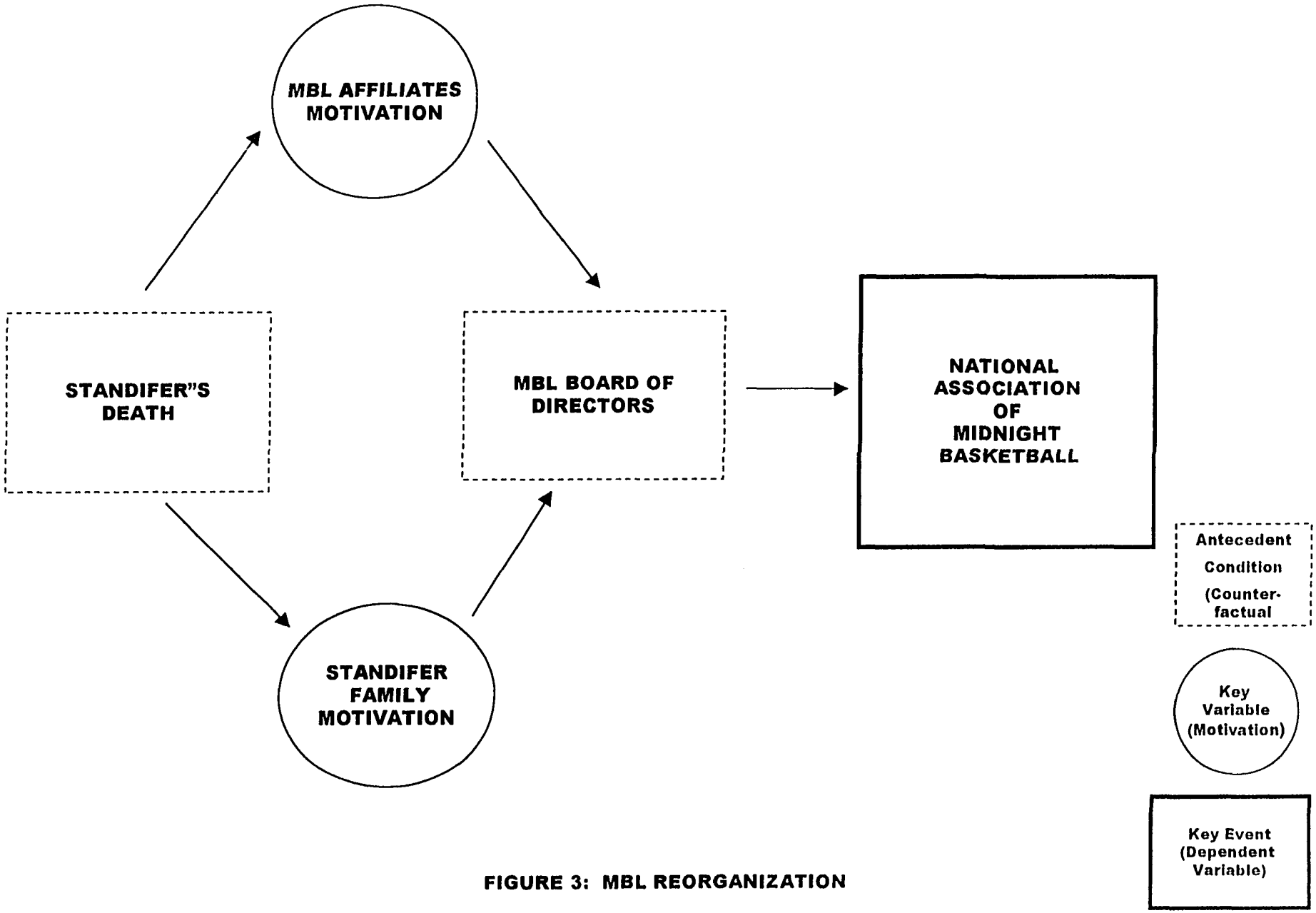

FIGURE 3: MBL REORGANIZATION

he lived in San Francisco, the selection of San Francisco as the home office for the National Association.

Theoretical Implications of Figure 3

Clearly, Standifer's death marked a major turning point in the movement. The split between Standifer's family and MBL affiliates provided a whole new dimension and dynamic to the generation of very loosely informally affiliated leagues. For his family, MBL became a symbol of Standifer's legacy as well as a program directed at saving at-risk youth from a life of crime and violence. The Standifer family set out to ensure that the organization reflected this image, while MBL affiliates were concerned about maintaining the program's goals and standards as each applied them in their own setting. The end result of the two motivations was the creation of a new compromise organization, the National Association of Midnight Basketball. The addition of a formal National Association to oversee MBL illustrates a common dilemma for an organization or for a social movement: how to institutionalize activities after the retirement or death of the founder. Often, the founders are charismatic leaders whose organizations are informally tied to them personally. Their departure usually calls for a more formal structure defined in terms of rules and regulations rather than personalities. In this case a separate association was constructed in order to provide protection of Standifer's legacy and the image of Midnight Basketball.

The Political Dimension Of Midnight Basketball

In Figures 4A and 4B, I examine Midnight Basketball from the standpoint of its politicization at the national level. There are two antecedent conditions. First is

"the role played by President Bush's 1000 Points of Light Program" and the second is "Representative Patricia Schroeder's (D-Co.) participation on the House Committee on Children, Youth and Families." These two antecedent conditions represent the motivations to seek out successful grassroots programs. In search of examples of privately financed voluntary associations, President Bush named Midnight Basketball the 124th Point of Light in the 1000 Points of Light Program. For different reasons, Rep. Schroeder visited the Chicago Midnight Basketball Program. Her visit to Chicago secured her belief that the program should be supported financially with public funds, a belief shared by Senator Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill.). Had Schroeder and Moseley-Braun not held their respective positions within Congress, they probably would not have been motivated to pursue federal funding for the program nor would they have been in a position to do so. This motivation is a key variable because it sets the stage for the inclusion of Midnight Basketball in Congressional legislation.

Discussions of Midnight Basketball in the House Committee on Children, Youth and Family was the impetus to include MBL in the Urban Recreation and At-Risk Youth Act. The latter legislation was soon followed by the Park and Recreation Youth Block Grant Act. However, the most promising legislation to include Midnight Basketball was the product of Moseley-Braun and Schroeder. Committed to the belief that the program should be funded, they co-sponsored legislation known as the "Goals 2000 Educate American: Midnight Basketball League Training and Partnership Act." The subsequent rejection of the Training and Partnership Act serves as the event which motivated President Bill Clinton to consider the program as

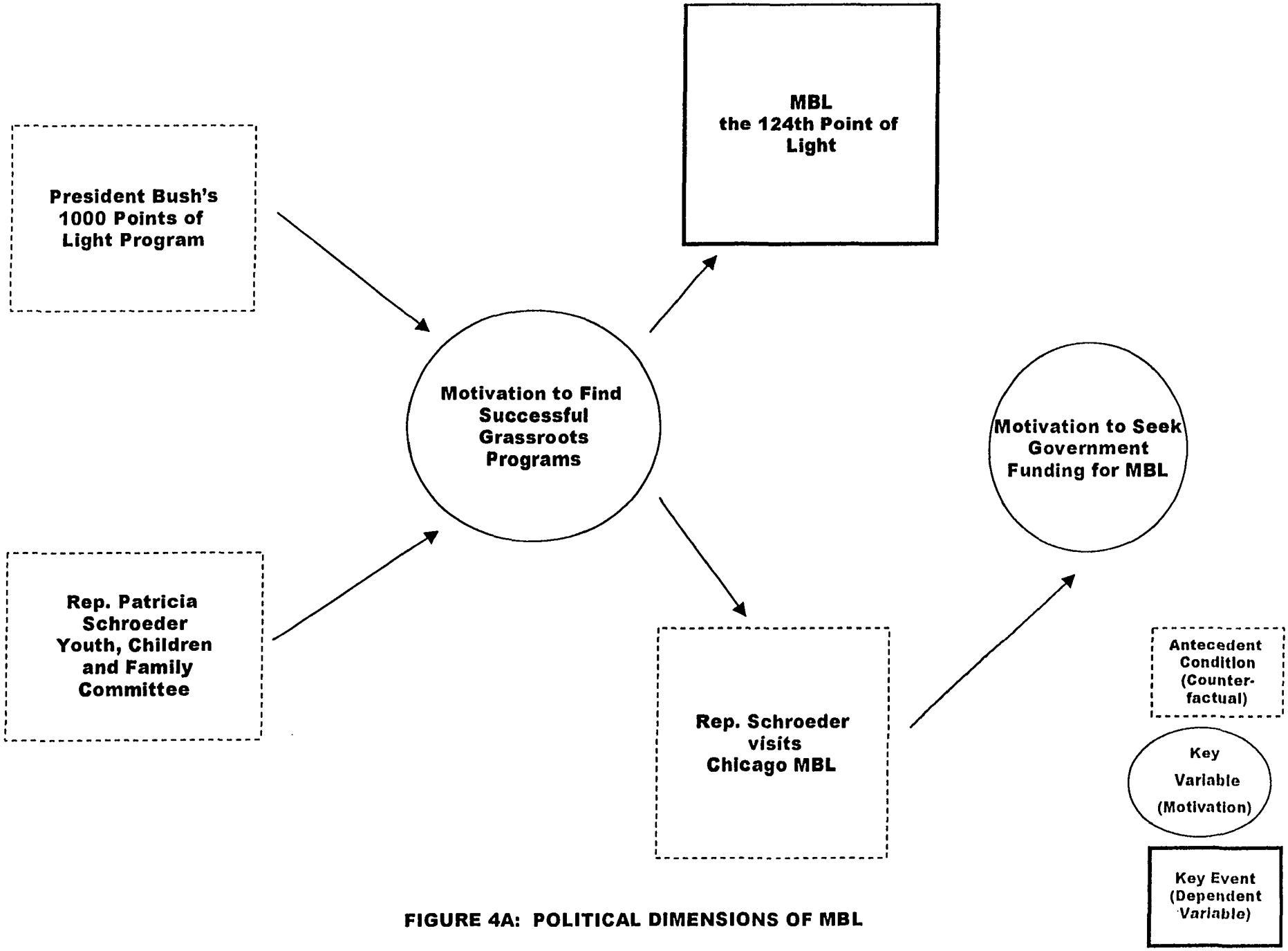

FIGURE 4A: POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF MBL

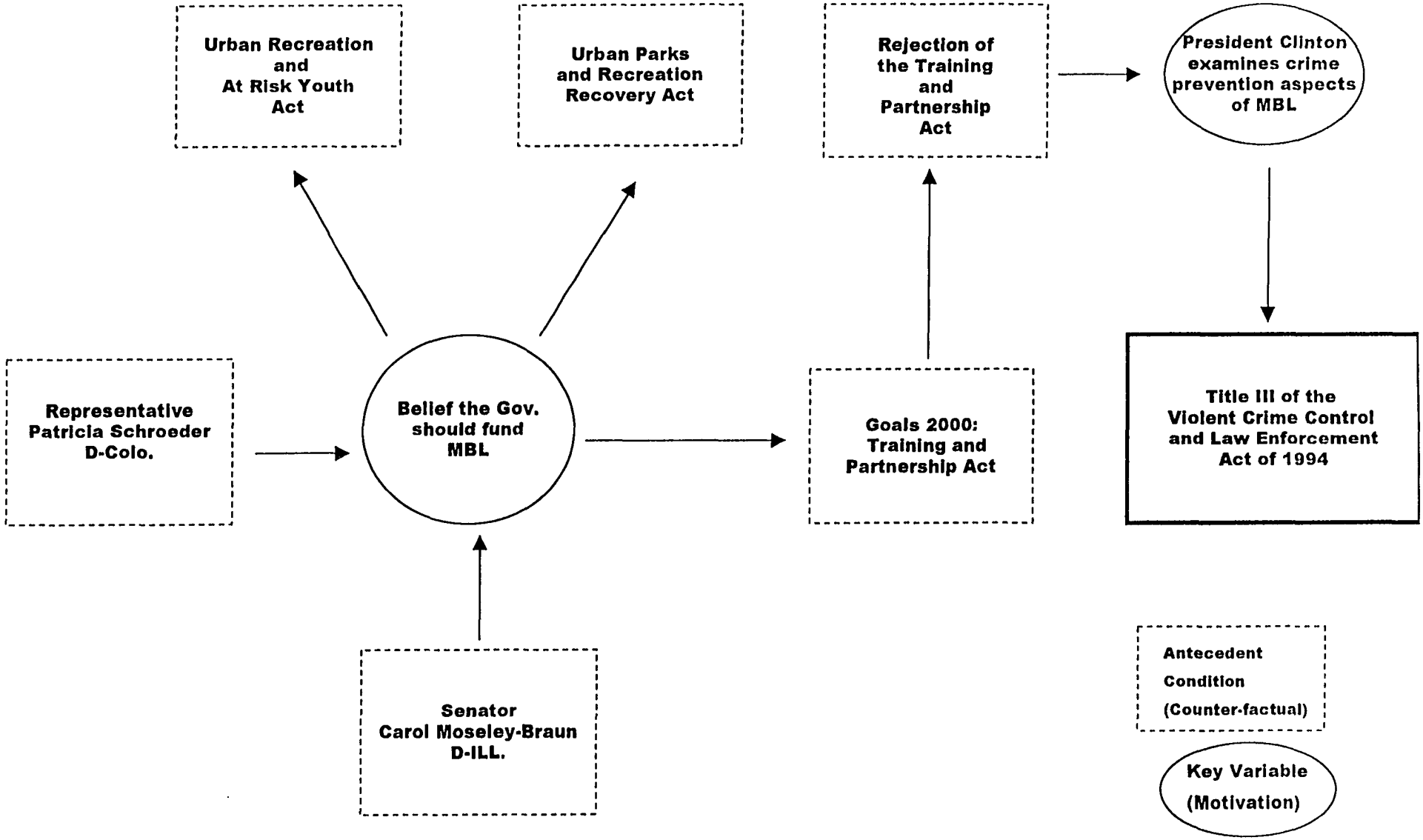

FIGURE 4B: THE QUEST FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDING

a preventive component in his 1994 Crime Bill. President Clinton's involvement in the legislation of the program did not come about simply because of his compassion and concern. It came about because of the need, as President of the United States, to put together a comprehensive anti-crime bill that was also a crime prevention bill. MBL's inclusion in the 1994 Crime Bill served as the last key event in the construction of the social history of Midnight Basketball from 1986 to 1994.

Theoretical Implications of Figures 4A and 4B

The theoretical significance of figures 4A and 4B can be found in special packaging of Midnight Basketball. As the program moved into the political arena, the claims-making changed in two very distinct ways. First, Former President Bush viewed MBL through the 1000 Points of Light program as an example of community efforts to combat the social problems of drug abuse and crime without government intervention. Second, Representative Schroeder and Senator Braun's legislation treated the program as a means to educate and train young men who had been separated from the opportunity structure.

These two views created a political climate that stirred confusion concerning the program's intention and it consequences. When President Clinton tried to bring the two images together by incorporating the program in his 1994 Crime Bill, he encountered opposition from those who questioned the program's crime prevention capabilities. During the crime bill debates, critics were unenthusiastic about the suggestion that picking up a basketball and shooting a few baskets would transform robbers and gang bangers into law abiding citizens. This portrayal left no clear picture of the drastic need for role models and genuine guidance as a means of

prevention of crime and violence. The critics eventually attacked both the program's direct relationship in preventing crime and its more indirect methods of facilitating crime prevention.

From a resource mobilization perspective, the politicization of MBL reflects its place and competition within a social movement industry (SMI). As a social movement organization, MBL defined its goals as reducing the involvement of young men between the ages of 17 and 25 in criminal activity between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. Thus, it joined the ranks of many other social movement organizations with similar goals of reducing crime and was categorized by some as a part of the crime prevention sector of society. At the same time, MBL espoused education and training to provide these at-risk young men the necessary social tools to escape a life of crime and violence. The debate drew into the fray other interested persons and organizations who preferred to fund law enforcement and prisons as a means of crime prevention. To them, MBL was just another mindless, liberal, feel-good program. At stake were the questions of whether or not government funds should be involved and, if so, how and to what ends they should be spent. Both the public arenas model and resource mobilization theory note the competitiveness of this process, based not on the "worthiness" of the problem or cause, but on the effectiveness of the respective advocates.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation is to document the claims-making activity of those persons responsible for the transformation of a grassroots, community-based program into a nationally recognized organization. The social history of Midnight Basketball lays the foundation for more profound work not only in the area of social movements but also in the area of social control, with specific attention paid to the systemic implications of Midnight Basketball. The holistic manner in which this program combines community, industry, and family as primary vehicles of social control is deserving of further sociological investigation.

This dissertation triangulates the constructivist approach to social problems with the public arenas model and resource mobilization theory to provide a rich and detailed description and explanation for the developmental process of a social movement. This study not only outlines the developmental course of the program but also examines the motivations and claims-making activities behind the program's development. This dissertation affirms that social movements exhibit a temporal course of development with different phases or stages. Each stage lays the foundation for its successor, and each succeeding stage contains new elements which distinguish it from its predecessor. Therefore, the social history of Midnight Basketball (MBL) is more than just a chronological account. It is a descriptive depiction of the complex nature of a social movement.

The constructivist approach to social problems is utilized as a guide for reconstructing the process by which Midnight Basketball moved from the

neighborhood to the nation. The constructivist approach to a social problem stipulates that social movements do not arise full-blown, commanding community attention and evoking targeted policies and vehicles for their cause. Rather, they are the product of someone's effort on behalf of the cause. Thus, in this dissertation a social movement is presented as always in a dynamic state of "becoming" (Fuller and Myers 1941:322). The narratives derived from the key persons within MBL were especially useful in establishing a detailed sequence of events contained in the temporal order.

Since much of this study revolves around the claims-making activity which propels Midnight Basketball from the neighborhood to the nation, close attention must be paid to the arenas in which this activity occurs in addition to the temporal order of development. This is where the public arenas model becomes a vital theoretical guide for this study. The public arenas model points to how social operatives compete for public attention and resources. It also takes into account the way social movement leaders adapt their claims to fit the requirements of public arenas. The integration of the constructivist approach with the public arenas model produces a schematic description of MBL as a social movement which views action as a scarce resource and emphasizes competition and selection in media and other arenas of public discourse (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988:53). In this case, a vivid description of the actions or lack of action of claims-makers details the progress or deterioration in MBL's development. Consider basketball for instance. Basketball was the hook which brought in the at-risk youth and gave the program its first success; however, it was the claim of reduction in crime which hooked volunteers and

supporters. When the program reached celebrity status as a nationally recognized program, the symbol of basketball attracted criticism as opponents mocked the idea that playing ball might keep young men from becoming criminals. However, basketball was not the real culprit. Rather, the claims and counter-claims were based in differing views of the etiology, prevention, and treatment of crime.

Resource mobilization theory further explains the complexity of Midnight Basketball as a social movement. Any social movement must find and tap adequate resources--money, people, good will, and the like-- in order to survive. An account of MBL's developmental stages must emphasize both the societal support and the constraint of the Midnight Basketball phenomenon. There are a number of resources which must be mobilized, such as participants, volunteers, and financial sponsors. Most social movement initiatives fail or simply fizzle out after a short period of time. Only a few reach celebrity status. MBL reached its level of visibility and success because it was able to attract and retain a wide range of support from a variety of interested persons and interest groups.

The resource mobilization perspective traces MBL's development from a social initiative, to a formal social movement organization, and finally, to a player within a larger social movement industry. As a social movement, MBL had a very direct and narrow set of beliefs. First, it holds the notion that young men who are at-risk of being victims of or perpetrators of violent crime between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. may be kept from harm's way by alternative wholesome activity. Secondly, there are many people and groups, representing an array of special

concerns and interest, who are willing to "invest" in MBL in order to provide this activity.

As an initiative to change, MBL became a social movement organization (SMO), as its goals and structure became more formal. In this case, MBL identified its role as a "safe haven" and hence as a way of reducing crime and violence. The Department of Corrections, Chicago Housing Authority, and President Bush's 1000 Points of Light Program, and President Clinton's Crime Bill especially emphasized the latter goal. Each of these groups and concerns is an entity in its own right with an agenda only partially coterminous with MBL. However, when they are joined together, they represent and give shape to the broadly held preferences and diverse sub-preferences of a broader Social Movement Industry (SMI). As such, MBL was categorized as part of a number of social service programs designed to cure society of its ills. Though no "fault" of MBL's immediate organizers, the program became aligned with related issues of education, job training, and community development. This categorization transformed MB from a social movement organization to part of a larger social movement industry made up of organizations and counter organizations. Once MBL attracted the support of Democrats interested in funding it, it also attracted the ire and ridicule of Congressional Republicans. This organizational transformation of a social movement from a resource mobilization perspective allows for a clearer understanding of the social imagery and political entanglement of the program in its transitory stages of growth and development.

Finally, the narrative establishes an historical, causal network of events. The counter-factual technique, employed to infer which events are causally related, allows

for an interpretation which is more grounded historically and temporally than is typical

in most formal research, and more nuanced and explicit than those usually contained in narrative (Griffin 1993:1128).

At the analytic core of this analysis is the temporal ordering and sequencing of action. The relevance of the sequence is that its temporal order and position in the narrative pushes the story forward. The inferences about Midnight Basketball reached through the use of this kind of analysis are easily replicated. It provides an analytic blueprint which outlines the path of causal implications and reasoning behind the development of Midnight Basketball as a social movement.

Aside from the intellectual posturing, the social history of Midnight Basketball is a story of hope. MBL has been characterized in many ways since its inception in 1986. However, the primary intent and focus of the program has not changed. The founders and organizers designed MBL to do what society has not: to provide young at-risk males with a second chance in life. The program targeted an "older generation" of youths considered by many standards to have fallen through the cracks. The dangerous and threatening situations confronting these young men also was compounded by the social isolation of the communities in which they lived. Midnight Basketball stepped in and provided the social exposure and role models so desperately needed to help them lead productive lives away from crime and violence of their own communities. As former President George Bush once stated about MBL:

> The last thing Midnight Basketball is about is basketball....it's about providing opportunity for young adults to escape drugs and the streets and get on with their lives. (Wilbon, Washington Post 1991:G9)

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APPENDIX A
CHRONOLOGY OF INTERVIEWS

DATE	PERSON	LOCATION
November 18, 1995	Mike Klein	NY MBL Home Office, New York City, NY
March 30, 1996	Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun	OCCE, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK
June 26, 1996	Heida Gardner	Greenbelt Marriott Hotel, Greenbelt, MD
June 28, 1996	Frank Burks	Greenbelt Marriott Hotel, Greenbelt, MD
June 28, 1996	Anthony Bradley	Greenbelt Marriott Hotel, Greenbelt, MD
November 21, 1996	Gil Walker	Ida B. Wells Housing Complex, Chicago, IL
Spring 1997	Rep. Patricia Schroeder	University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK

APPENDIX B
CHRONOLOGY OF CONTACTS

DATE	CONTACT	AFFILIATION
October 1994	Valenthia Doolin	Oklahoma, MBL
October 1994	Wayne Thompson	Oklahoma, MBL
October 1994	Mary Myrick	Oklahoma. MBL, Partnership of Oklahoma
June 1995	Eric Standifer	NAMBL, President
June 1995	Mary Claude	Nation Black Graduate Student Association
June 06, 1996	Stan Hebert	NAMBL, National Director
June 06, 1996	Eric Standifer	NAMBL, President
June 06, 1996	Barbara Edmiston	NAMBL, Office Secretary
June 25, 1996	Martha Standifer	Board of Directors, Chairperson
June 26, 1996	Larry Gray	San Francisco MBL, Co-Commissioner
June 26, 1996	Emmanuel Hunt	Atlanta MBL, President/CEO
June 1996	Leon Reed	Beer Institute/Board of Directors, Treasurer
June 27, 1996	Karen and Nelson Standifer	Glenarden MBL, Executive Director and Commissioner

IMAGE EVALUATION
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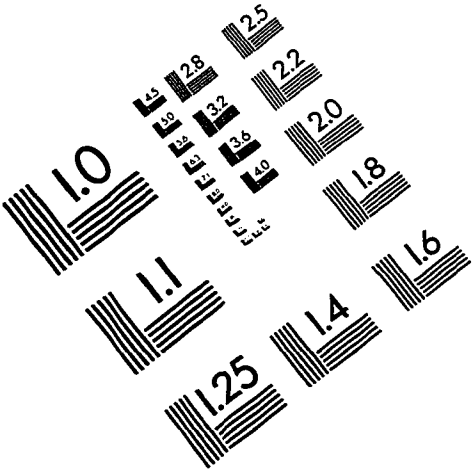

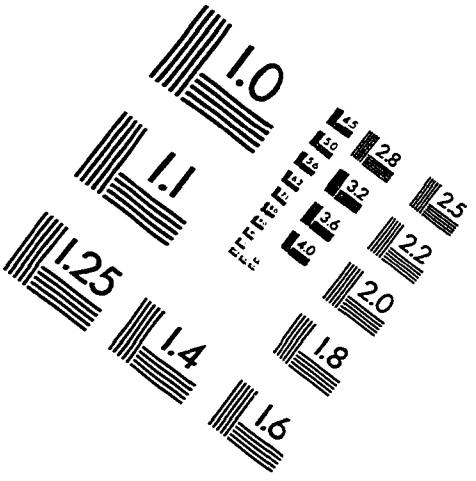

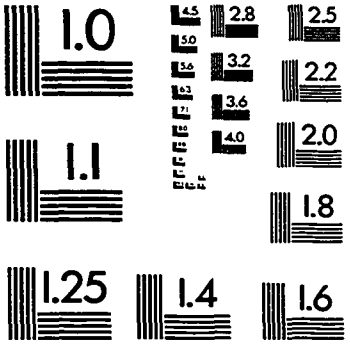

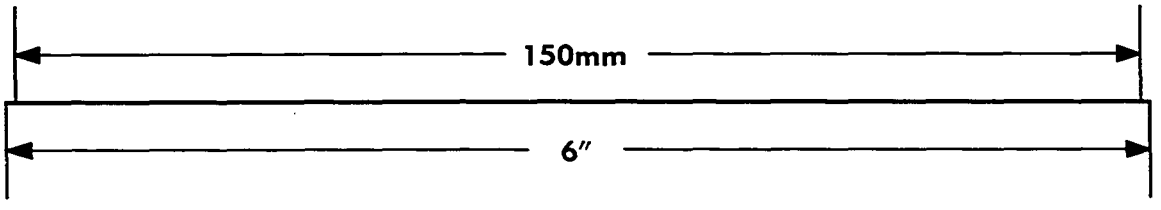

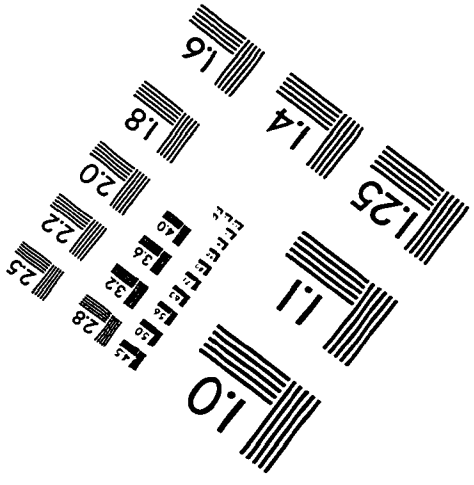

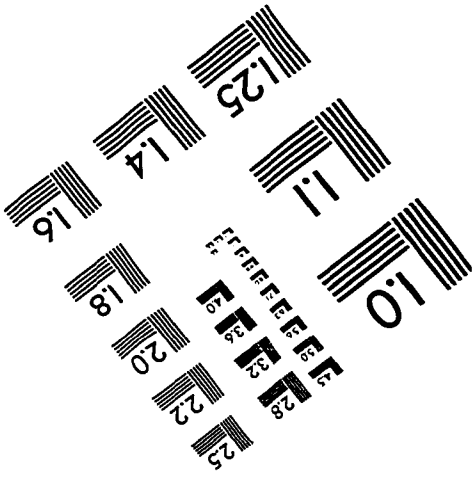

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