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The purpose of this study was to investigate sport as a mechanism of mobility for the black athlete in contemporary American society. Sport has been viewed as a cultural manifestation, as a platform for racial protest and as a vehicle for the black man living in a white man's establishment. Sociological considerations have been reviewed relating to the status of the Negro in America, the analysis of the conceptual complexity of social mobility and the reasons why sport has been sought by blacks as a recourse against social denial.

American society maintains both a class and a caste structure. The Negro has been able to advance within his caste but has rarely been able to achieve horizontal mobility across caste lines. Sport has enhanced mobility within the caste and has enabled some black athletes to make progress toward integration.

Although prejudice and exploitation are evident in the athletic world it is concluded that sport affords the Negro one of the greatest opportunities for social, cultural, and economic recognition in America. The sporting ritual is characterized by ethical principles which promote harmony in human relationships and it is one of the more positive and responsive mechanisms of integration operating in society today. Sport has promising potential for contributing toward de-segregation in many aspects of American life.

SPORT AS A VEHICLE OF SOCIAL MOBILITY FOR THE  
BLACK ATHLETE IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA

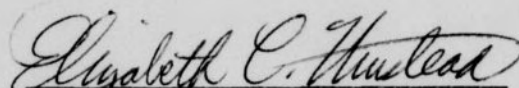
by

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The Negro came upon the American scene as an order-taker; a slave who as a worker was always the supervised and directed. (123:307) When efforts to make slaves of Indians and white indentured servants failed in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, Africans were imported in large numbers as the human resource for the new colonies. (Lomax, 22-23) The blacks were considered a separate, inferior species. It was natural that theirs should be a subordinate rank in relations among the races of man. In 1857, Chief Justice Roger Taney claimed in the Dred Scott decision that Negroes were "so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." (Miller, 25:6-8) Slaves were obviously inferior to their masters, in intelligence and manners, and since such things were biologically determined, was this not proof that whites were racially superior to Negroes? (Miller, 25:6-8) So began "white supremacy," a sentiment which has developed into a social cancer that is destroying the moral fiber of a once strong nation.

The Negro's American birth into an inferior societal caste began in 1619 when he was first imported as an indentured servant. His history has been a continuous effort to escape the boundaries placed upon him by the white majority and to find identification in the American mainstream. (Lomax, 22:21) These days of servitude have led the Negro toward the hopeful reality of

emancipation promised in 1863. As the blackman walked wearily into the twentieth century his future looked bleak and foreboding. The decision from the Plessy vs. Ferguson case institutionalized segregation. Although "separate but equal" was the proposal, separate and unequal was the practice. Jim Crow ruled and justice and inequality prevailed. (Lomax, 22:41) "The American Negro spent the first half of the twentieth century adjusting to and recovering from the all-pervading reality of legalized segregation." (Lomax, 22:42) At the turn of the century fraud, intimidation, and underhanded legislative devices reduced the Negro to a position of political impotence. Discrimination in housing and public carriers, inadequate education, and employment barriers limited the social and economic advancement of all blacks. The Negro found himself at once a part of and apart from the larger community in which he lived. The feeling of hopelessness, of "not belonging" and of "not being wanted" pervaded young and old in the deteriorated periphery of cities North and South. The attitude of "nothing to be gained" and "nothing to lose" blanketed black behavior and thwarted ambition. (Reid, 112:259)

More than 25 years ago one of the southern states adopted a new method of capital punishment. Poison gas supplanted the gallows. Inside the sealed death chamber a microphone was placed so that the words of the dying prisoner might be heard. The first victim in these early lethal experiences was a young Negro. As the pellet dropped and gas curled upward throughout the chamber a voice cried through the microphone, ". . . Save me Joe Louis, Save me Joe Louis, Save me Joe Louis . . . ." (King, 17:119-120) These last words reveal



the helplessness, and profound despair of the Negroes at this time.

The condemned young Negro, groping for someone who might care for him found only the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. Joe Louis would care because he was a Negro. Joe Louis would do something because he was a fighter. In a few words the dying man had written a social commentary. Not God, not government, not charitably minded white men, but a Negro who was the world's most expert fighter, in this last extremity, was the last hope. (King, 17:119-120)

On May 17, 1954 the United States Supreme Court rendered one of the most important decisions of the century. Separate education of the races was considered a violation of the rights of minority group persons. Further judicial decisions not only in education, but in other social relations exposed the color-blindness of the Constitution and the myth of the Declaration of Independence. (Douglass, 64:49) A movement toward civil rights, the exploding postwar economy, and an undeniable urgency on the part of the oppressed black masses for dignity have forced the country into the greatest social revolution of the century. Life for the blackman is better, but it is not yet utopia. Greater change has occurred in the past ten years than in the entire 107 years since the Emancipation Proclamation. Blacks and whites now may eat together publicly in the South, although some establishments still prohibit mixed social drinking. Black and white spectate at baseball games, political rallies, and carnivals, but rarely enter church together. Youngsters' teams are integrated but swimming facilities are often segregated. School desegregation is now becoming an activated policy in the South. Black voter registration in 1969 was 64.8 per cent of those eligible. Elected black Southern officials have increased from a small number in 1960 to 78 in 1965 to 528 in 1969. Jim Crow as a legal phenomenon is

officially dead. Blacks are free to use almost any public accommodation from restroom to restaurant due to the passage of the 1964 civil rights bill. (103:1)

Although the past decade has brought the dawn of a new day, change from the social inadequacies of a slavery-laden past evolve slowly. The institutionalized system of racism is a strong obstacle to the attainment of equality for all. Negro participation in American society is still restricted by their second-class citizenship. "The truth of the matter is that the end of discrimination de jure does little, perhaps even nothing at all, to alter the effects of discrimination de facto." (Johnson, 81:58) Theoretically the black man is exposed to the vagaries, opportunities, promises, and rewards of white culture. Presently, however, he lives on the unfilled theories and abstractions of equality. There must be some escape from the non-fulfillment. Black youth affected by present discriminatory policies have few alternatives in eliminating social denial. James Baldwin discusses the possible recourse black children may take.

Every Negro boy . . . realizes at once, profoundly, because he wants to live, that he stands in great peril and must find with speed a "thing," a gimmick to lift him out, to start him on his way. And it does not matter what the gimmick is. For some it is crime. For others it is narcotics. For more than a few the only gimmick that seems feasible is sports. (Olsen, 28:16)

Athletic participation and skill superiority may be so viewed as a unique gimmick for the black man's survival in the white man's establishment. Sport as a positive mechanism of mobility for the black athlete will be the primary concern of this writing. Analysis of the conceptual complexity of social mobility and its relation to the stratification system of society; the status of the

black athlete in America, and the use of sport as a platform for black dissent will also be subject of further discussion.

The Negro who chases the brass ring of sports to the exclusion of other aspects of life does so because he wants to feel alive . . . . The Negro develops a feeling for sports and turns it into a system of esthetics, his own private art. Sport becomes a raison d'etre and perforce the Negro athlete becomes more skilled than the white. The Negro has a greater desire to excel in sport as it is more mandatory for his future opportunities than for the white boy. (Olsen, 28:14-15)

## CHAPTER II

### THE NEGRO AND SPORT

#### SPORT IN THE AMERICAN CULTURE

Sport constitutes a vital part of American culture. It is a strong social force within society and a great clue to national character. Special value is gained either as a participant, spectator, beneficiary, or donor, rooter, and bettor. Some praise it as being the highest of physical arts. (Tunis, 37:275) In defining this cultural manifestation one may view sport as an institution in society and/or a domain of human activity. Regarding activity orientation, sport is considered orderly gross movement used in the expression of man's feelings and desires, occurring usually within a competitive medium. (Torkildsen, 136:90) Tunis comments: "Sport is that competitive physical game, activity, contest or diversion, indoors and out, that interests and absorbs the American nation." (37:5) Simply stated sport is a pastime concerned with life and the meaning of living. Cozens and Stumpf relate:

Sports and games provide a touchstone for understanding how people live, work, and think and may also serve as a barometer of a nation's progress in civilization . . . it not only mirrors life today, but could be seen as an historical mapping of a way of life of a people. (7:2)

The perspective of the sporting phenomenon as a social institution allows a clearer understanding of its significance. Recognizing that all social institutions are part of a pattern of social relationships one realizes that,

. . . the sports life of America comprises more than ball parks, stadiums, participants, spectators, or physical education as taught in the schools.  
 . . . sports function in American culture to represent group ways of meeting needs which confront our society. (Cozens and Stumpf, 60:12-13, 56-57)

The sporting ritual affects our clothes, customs, and culture. It permeates our language, our art, our law, our politics, and mass communication. The Kennedys' charisma was partially developed on the dunes of Cape Cod during the heat of famed touch football games. Eisenhower's golf cleats marred the White House floors. His first popularity loss occurred when he passed up baseball's opening day in Washington to swing a nine iron on the Georgia links. The loss would have been greater had he spent the day working at the White House. (Sage, 33:42-45) The newstands are filled with headlines of World Series scores while international crisis reports are found on the bottom of the page. One of the most respected newspapers in the country, The New York Times, devotes more space to sport than it does to art, books, editorials, television, or the theatre. (Sage, 33:42-43) As a business enterprise alone, Americans spend \$20 billion a year on sport, approximately one sixth of the national disposable income. (Sage, 33:42-43) Sport, one writer says:

. . . is basic to one's stock of meaningful concepts almost to the point of banality. It is as familiar as any household brand, becoming as institutionalized as the church, television, or politics, and as obvious as the winter cold or the summer heat . . . . (Torkilden, 136:62)

The phenomenal explosion of sports at the turn of the century and its continuance has been due to industrialization, economic development, the liberalization of moral codes, and the increase of leisure time. (Torkilden, 136:62) With America's interest in both "spectation" and participation along with the nation's



concern for physical fitness, sport is being utilized more than ever before. It seems likely that "the coming of age of sport" is just beginning. (Sage, 33:53)

"Sport is the American adventure of the twentieth century and an extension of the American dream." (Tunis, 37:16) Our adventurous pioneer background, the tradition of physical strength, and the "ability to play the game" give the sporting scene a more exciting appeal than other endeavors. Now that many frontiers have been conquered, the heroes of American life have changed from pioneer to the athlete. The frontiersmen of the past stressed achievement, and the need to excel and to press on. Americans are enamored by the desire, perserverance, and discipline of highly skilled sportsmen who sacrifice greatly for outstanding physical competency. Sport, by its very nature represents a struggle for dominance and physical superiority. Social status is accorded the motorically skilled, as society places a high premium on achievers. (Sage, 33:121) The world loves a winner, marvels at the fine physique, and enviously watches the excellent in athletics. The drama of competition captivates the American audience. It is both contagious and universal. As our ancestors were pioneers of the wilderness, so also are contemporary American frontiersmen in the unconquered world of physical performance.

Our frontier inheritance, ever deep within, keeps pushing us on in athletics as in other phases of our national life. The pioneer of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries hacked his way westward into the setting sun. The champion of the twentieth shaded his eyes with his hand, ran down a cinder path and pushed the bar in the pole vault. (Sage, 37:16)

Kluckhohn, a noted anthropologist says:



Any cultural practice must be functional or it will disappear before long . . . it must somehow contribute to the survival of the society or to the adjustment of the individual. (Cozens and Stumpf, 61:12-13, 56-57)

Sport has enhanced societal continuance in several ways. It is an approved form of ritual and ceremony. It fosters culture with needed hero imagery for the young. It is sanctioned as an outlet for emotional release. It is also a very definite force aiding the integration of our bi-racial nation. Sport is the success story of the twentieth century; the great equalizer, the modern way up the ladder, the goal toward Americanization. (Tunis, 37:18) "It makes heroes of underdogs and lifts the downtrodden up to solid ground." (Sage, 33:275) John R. Betts writes, "Nowhere is the process of Americanization more in evidence than in sport." (Boyle, 3:100)

The minority factions of our country find strong identification in the athletic arena.

While jazz musicians, who treasure their own level of racial equality, may disagree, the fact is that no other area of American life comes closer than a distant second to sports in the matter of practicing democracy. (76:114)

The assimilation of Jews, Negroes, Poles, and Irish into American life often occurs through the avenues of boxing, tennis, baseball, and basketball. It seems evident that those groups which have the greatest difficulty socially; who must work the hardest to live, produce, and survive in the American mainstream have more than their share of athletes. Fifty years ago, big league box scores were full of Irish and German names, later Italian and names of those of central European extraction predominated. Baseball, boxing, and

professional football have been indices of large immigration movements. Weinberg and Arond (130:460-469) described the occupational culture of the boxer in a study spanning the years 1900 to 1950. They found that most professional boxers were of low socioeconomic background and the children of immigrants. First Irish, then Jewish, then Italians, and presently Negroes dominated this sport. Boxing as well as other athletic activities offer the slum boys quick success and status attainment. Interestingly enough, and one of the few investigations with such a conclusion; the study by Weinberg and Arond found that although a number of successful boxers experience a rather quick economic ascent at a young age, their sports career typically results in an equally swift economic descent.

(Kenyon, 16:104) Two professional scouts discussed the predominance of black people in this year's Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association tournament:

"It isn't a physical thing" said the white scout. "It's a sociological thing." 'Who were the best fighters forty years ago?' 'The Irish right?' 'The Irish were in the ghettos.' 'How about thirty years ago?' 'It was the Polacks.' 'The Polish were in the ghettos.' 'And who have been the best fighters for the last thirty years?' 'Who's been in the ghettos?' 'The blacks.' No career offers more equal opportunity than pro sports. Most kids in the ghetto would rather shoot at the hoop than fight. They have more of a chance to do it than bat the ball. And it's easier to play basketball than be a musician. If they do it well enough, the National Basketball Association has a minimum salary of \$16,000 per year. . . . So when pro basketball opened its doors to blacks in the mid-fifties, the tide began to build. . . . (125:35)

Sport has reached its heights in the classes which are often the least privileged. It thus represents, in class societies, a form of social advancement, just as elsewhere in the world it is a sign of a peoples' advance toward a status of equality or freedom. It is because the sports movement has been one of social, and sometimes even political advance that it is a mass movement. . . . Sport, like culture, is a vehicle of

moral and ethical values . . . for nothing in the world today is younger or has greater potentialities than sport, and nothing is older or richer than culture; and it is of vital importance to us that there should be an interpretation and mutual understanding of the two. (Maheu, 96:49-54)

### THE NEGRO IN SPORT

Sport is one of the few areas in American society in which the Negro has found opportunity and equality. Sport has always symbolized, theoretically at least, the American dream of sportsmanship and fair play. It has allowed the Negro to assert himself successfully and to view the top as possible reality. Although only one American in eight is Negro, blacks make up more than one quarter of the regulars on major league baseball teams, more than one third of the professional football starters, and more than one half of all professional basketball players. (Sage, 33:246) To be more precise, according to Ebony Magazine, there are one hundred and seventy-seven Negro players, or 27.7 per cent of the total National Football League and 105 Negroes or 29.2 per cent of the total players in the American Football League. At the opening of the 1967 baseball season, there were 167 Negroes among 500 players in the National and American Leagues. (132:71) Blacks represent 58 per cent in the National Basketball Association and 54 per cent in the American Basketball Association making the basketball profession a black majority. Thousands of Negroes are playing on college and high school athletic teams. Black Americans have dominated recent Olympic games and are leading contenders in boxing and other popular sporting endeavors. As a matter of fact, since 1937, Negroes have held the world's heavyweight boxing championship for all but five years.

(Davis, 8:789)

At the beginning of this century Blacks indulged in the conventional athletic activities of the day although it has been barely two decades since they have been out of effective bondage in the world of athletics. In the second Kentucky Derby run on May 15, 1876 there was at least one Negro jockey riding the rail. (Clement, 57:222) The third Kentucky Derby, run on May 22, 1877, was won by a horse named "Baden-Baden," and the winning jockey was a Negro, Billy Walker. (Clement, 57:22) Other than Isaac Murphy, the first jockey three-time winner of the Derby, Jimmy Winkfield, a double winner of the Kentucky classic and the aforementioned riders there are few other Negroes identified with the earlier horse riding programs. (Ploski and Brown, 31:598)

American Negroes in track and field events were close behind the Negro boxers in the first half of this century both in numbers and in the high quality of their performances . . . at the 1936 Olympic games there were so many men and women of color who held membership on the American teams that Adolf Hitler is reported to have labeled them as American African allies. (Clement, 57:228)

Jesse Owens won the heart of his countrymen after winning four gold medals at the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. Each time he crossed the finish line Hitler is reported either to have turned his back or to have left the stadium. Owens' victories revealed the pettiness of Hitler's superior racist theories. (Clement, 57:222) Few Negroes have claimed world championship in professional wrestling. Presently there are no Negroes on any of the six teams in the National Hockey League. Negro participation in the individual and dual sports has been minimal due to lack of opportunity and scarcity of recreational facilities. Those sports which are generally fostered in more affluent social

groups such as tennis, golf, swimming, etc., are slow to attract and integrate the Negro. Conversely, those events that are accessible even to the poorest ghetto child, such as the games of boxing, basketball, and track are rampant with dominant black athletes. (Ploski and Brown, 31:601, 732) Martin Luther King, Jr. commented that a primary cause of the Chicago riots in 1966 was the lack of recreational facilities in the area of conflict. (Kraus, 87:42-45) The young people are out in the streets while their elders are in local taverns and pool halls. Many forms of recreational activity with potential as outlets for expressions of hostility and violence are costly and socially excluded to blacks. According to a report of the Outdoor Recreation Review Commission, hunting, fishing, and camping are enjoyed by a much lower percentage of Negroes than whites. They rarely belong to Rod and Gun Clubs; they do not have access to private preserves, nor can they afford expensive fees for use of commercial facilities. Not only are Negroes excluded from public recreation facilities and campgrounds in many areas, they often are unattracted to recreational programs organized by and for predominantly middle-class interest groups. (Kraus, 87:42-45) Up until December 21, 1951, the city of Houston, Texas had contended that the municipal golf course was a facility of the park set apart, under the segregation policy of the city, "for use solely by white persons." It said that other parks containing no golf courses had been reserved by Negroes. (Cozens and Stumpf, 7:254) Similar discriminatory practices confronted all blacks in other parts of the country prior to the "50's".

As early as 1867 the National Baseball Association barred all Negro



players and clubs from membership, although some evaded identity and/or formed their own counterpart leagues. The Homestead Groups and the Kansas City Monarchs were well known baseball clubs at the time, while the Harlem Globetrotters and the New York Rens were the outstanding black basketball teams. (Clement, 57:222) In 1880-1890, Southern white politicians anti-pathetic toward the Negroes eventually drove them not only from baseball, but from horse racing and barbering. Negroes retained a foothold in boxing, but many times had to agree to lose before they could get a fight. The social environment at this time was terribly anti-black as indicated by the popularity of the best-seller, The Negro A Beast. (Boyle, 3:103) In the 1920's Negro players gossiped that Babe Ruth was passing for white. Professor Frazier commented that many Negroes lay claim to a celebrity who had features that were possible Negroid.

"The Negroes," said Frazier, as with any people who have a low status and a negatively valued world, want to go ahead and neutralize that by claiming important people are Negroes. (Boyle, 3:106)

"Look at his nose, his lips", were the whispered words from many Negro mouths.

Many of the Southern colleges and high schools still maintain remnants of discriminatory customs in sport endeavors although the situation is better today. In 1955 Governor Griffin of Georgia asked the state Board of Regents to forbid the Georgia Technical Institute and the University of Georgia athletic teams from participating in games against any team with Negro players, or even



playing in any stadium where unsegregated audiences breathed the same air.

"The South stands at Armageddon," said Griffin. The battle is joined. We cannot make the slightest concession to the enemy in this dark and lamentable hour of struggle. There is no more difference in compromising the integrity of race on the playing field than in doing so in the classrooms. One break in the dike and the relentless seas will rush in and destroy us. (42:24)

Griffin's order concerned Georgia Technical Institute's scheduled Sugar Bowl game on January 2 with the University of Pittsburgh, which had a substitute Negro fullback Bobby Grier. Many southern leaders and editorialists scornfully denounced Griffin's actions, but one of the regents predicted that the board would back Griffin and adopt for future seasons a rule against playing under unsegregated conditions. The 1956 Sugar Bowl game was played as scheduled, "just this once." (42:24) An editorial written in the Commonweal, in rebuke of Griffin's political bias stated:

The Governor has, all unwittingly, focused attention on a conflict, for if a person learns that color does not determine performance on the playing field, he may learn that it is equally irrelevant in other areas. By his unwarranted action Governor Griffin may have succeeded in teaching others what he himself seems unable to learn. (131:274)

Up until 1954 when the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in the public schools, Birmingham, Alabama's city ordinance read:

It shall be unlawful for a Negro and a white person to play together, or in company with each other, in any games of cards, dice, dominoes, checkers, baseball, softball, football, basketball or similar games. (100:46)

In the spring of the year a half a dozen big league teams played exhibition games in the city in front of thousands of black and white spectators. Many "die-hard" white supremacists circulated petitions demanding a return to strict segregation

on the playing fields. They argued that mixed baseball would lead to "mongrelization". Shortly after this incident, Birmingham's citizens voted overwhelmingly to restore segregation to sports. (100:46)

### RACIAL INTEGRATION IN SPORT

The year 1946 was the famous breaking of the colored barrier in sports. Much of the credit for recognizing the potent force of sports as an innovator of integration is due to Branch Rickey. He commented:

. . . I believe that racial extractions and color hues and forms of worship are secondary to what men can do. The American public is not as concerned with a first baseman's pigmentation as it is with the power of his swing, the dexterity of his slide, the grace of his fielding, or the speed of his legs. (Bucher, 53:22)

The "Emancipator's" revolutionary decision of desegregating the national game paved the way for the Supreme Court's decision on school integration ten years later. Branch Rickey believed strongly in integration. His favorite book, published the year Jackie Robinson broke into major league baseball, was Slave and Citizen by Professor Tannebaum of Columbia. (Lardner, 90:85) Mr. Rickey talked at length about the manumission principle and what he considers to be the four prime factors in integration: proximity, professional opportunity, the flexibility of social status and religion. (Lardner, 90:85)

Branch Rickey signed Jackie Robinson as a second baseman in the International League at Montreal in 1946. The step was revolutionary. In 1947 Jackie moved into the Dodger training camp, making one of the most dramatic steps toward social integration for the American Negro since the Civil War.

(117:32) Jackie went on to win the National League batting title and was honored as the league's Most Valuable Player. During his ten years in the major leagues he hit .309 and was the first of his race to be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. (117:32) To prepare Robinson, the Dodger manager called him into his office one day. Robinson says:

I shall never forget the first interview I had with Mr. Rickey in 1945. I am a normal man with the feelings of any normal man. If anything, my competitive instincts-are so sharp that I will eagerly challenge any man who challenges me. But Mr. Rickey made entirely clear to me that day that I could not behave normally. Racial epithets would be hurled at me, and baseballs and spikes would be hurled at me also. The white players would be testing me, some because of an innate bias, but justifiably too in many cases, to see if I would measure up. On my ability to measure up to the challenge would depend not only my future but the future of my race in baseball; my race's future too perhaps, in other sports-and even in all of American life. (Henderson, 12: XII)

Branch Rickey had another meeting to conclude the overall success of his program of black participation in sports. He met with more than thirty prominent Brooklyn Negroes for the purpose of achieving "the backing and thorough understanding of the Negro race, and to avoid misinterpretation and abuse of the project. (Paxton, 29:388) While the guests assembled waiting to hear of the announcement that Robinson was being promoted from the Canadian International League to the Brooklyn Dodgers, Rickey arose after dinner and began his address:

I have a ball player named Jackie Robinson. He is on the Montreal team. He may stay there. He may be brought up to Brooklyn. I don't know at this point exactly when or if at all. But I want to say that if it happens, if Jackie Robinson does come up to the Dodgers as a major leaguer--the biggest threat to his success is the Negro people themselves. I mean it, and I'll repeat it. I say it as cruelly as I can, to make you all realize and appreciate the weight of responsibility that is not only on me and my associates but on Negroes everywhere. Every step of racial progress you

have made has been won by suffering and often bloodshed. This step in baseball is being taken for you by a single person whose wounds you cannot see or share. You haven't fought a single lick of this victory, if it is one. And yet on the day that Robinson enters the big league--if he does--everyone of you will go out and form parades and welcoming committees. You'll hold Jackie Robinson Days and Jackie Robinson nights. You'll get drunk. You'll fight. You'll be arrested. You'll wine and dine the player until he is fat and futile. You'll symbolize his importance into a national comedy, and an ultimate tragedy--yes, tragedy! For let me tell you this. If any individual, group or segment of Negro society uses the advancement of Jackie Robinson in baseball as a symbol of social "ism" or schism, as a triumph of race over race, I will curse the day I ever signed him to a contract and I will personally see that baseball is never so abased and misrepresented again! (Paxton, 24:388)

The Negro community received Rickey's warning aghast yet responded to his wishes. Cards were printed and widely distributed saying, "Don't spoil Jackie's chance." Ministers lectured from their pulpits. Negro newspapers carried articles interpreting the importance of Negroes behaving responsibly at games. (Dodson, 62:80) Organized baseball had to readjust. The narrow, bigot minds of spectator and participant alike had to widen intelligently. One spring day in 1946, Rickey sat with the Montreal manager watching an exhibition game in Daytona Beach. Jackie Robinson was covering the infield. He made a spectacular play, moving to ground a ball hit far to his left and completing the force out at second base.

"No other human being could have made that play." Rickey said proudly, while watching his companion. The manager, an admirable man born in the Deep South, scratched his chin, and looked sideways with curiosity at the Old Emancipator. "Mr. Rickey," he said speculatively, "do you really think Nigras are human beings?" (Lardner, 90:85)

And so continued many feelings and prejudiced views of biased whites, at the time. Rickey was correct in foreseeing the difficulty ahead for Robinson. He was severely tested and threatened. Racist stories were spread throughout the

league. Teams threatened to strike and refused to play the Dodgers while Jackie was a team member. Robinson turned the other cheek as he promised Branch Rickey he would do. He proved he could play in the major leagues as his mentor prophesized. Rickey offered Robinson an opportunity and he capitalized. Robinson comments:

. . . but the lesson of sports cannot be lost on the rest of society. No one in the world of sports ever asked that the Negro receive special or favored treatment. Nobody shortened the baseline when I was trying to steal a base; nobody moved the fences in for Willie Mays or shortened the field for Jim Brown, or lowered the basket for Oscar Robinson. And nobody asks that the Negro receive special treatment in life. All we asked for in sports was the chance to perform under rules making us equal to everyone else, the chance to compete against everyone else, to prove ourselves . . . . The history of the Negro in sports is in many ways a microcosm of the history of the Negro in America. For a long time our talents were hidden or ignored. When we received the opportunity we showed that we would compete and could excel. That is all the Negro is asking, in sports and in society--the opportunity. (Henderson, 12:xii-xiii)

Jackie Robinson's personal success, and that of his race has enforced continued forms of integration in other athletic endeavors. His historic breakthrough has undoubtedly made it easier for other black athletes not only in sport but in innumerable areas in American life. Four years after Robinson made the majors in 1947 a Negro played on a Southern team. The Rickey-Robinson contract pioneered certain vital areas of integrated housing in the South. It has enabled Negroes to live in hotels which previously refused them service. Although there is still discrimination in administrative and top managerial positions in sport; organized baseball has employed five Negro team managers, Emmett Ashford of the Pacific Coast League, as an umpire-in-chief and several major league coaches and scouts. Football also signed a Negro coach, Emben Tunnell



of the New York Giants shortly after Robinson signed with Montreal. Basketball also has opened up to black leadership. (76:116)

In tennis, Althea Gibson joined the once secluded tennis clubhouse, dancing to fame and victory on the Forest Hill and Wimbledon courts. In 1957, she won both the singles titles at Wimbledon and the United States, becoming the first Negress with such accomplishment. (Tunis, 37:124-125) An editorial concerning her victory at Wimbledon read:

. . . aside from being the world's best woman tennis player, Miss Gibson is a Bachelor of Science and an instructor in Physical Education at Lincoln University, Jefferson, Missouri. Now that she has hobnobbed with royalty and with the 'best people' all over the world in what is considered to be the most 'refined' of sports, is it too much to hope that one day she will have the right to return to her home state of South Carolina--and vote? (69:22-23)

Her success story is one of struggle. The United States Lawn Tennis Association reluctantly invited Miss Gibson to any of the tournaments at Forest Hills.

(88:77) Ex-tennis star Alice Marble wrote in defense of Althea Gibson, the Harlem Hoodlum, in the July 1950 issue of the American Lawn Tennis Magazine:

On my current tours, the question I am most frequently expected to answer is no long, 'What do you think of Gussie (Moran's) panties' for every individual who still cares whether Gussie Moran has lace on her drawers, there are three who want to know if Althea Gibson will be permitted to play in the National's this year. I think it's time we faced a few facts. If tennis is a game for ladies and gentlemen, it's also time we acted a little more like gentle people and less like sanctimonious hypocrites. If there is anything left in the name of sportsmanship it's more than time to display what it means to us. If Althea Gibson represents a challenge to the present crop of women players, it's only fair that they should meet the challenge on the courts, where Tennis is played. (76:116)

Althea Gibson was eventually accepted "on the courts," as it is impossible to



be a true sportsman and also a bigot. She once commented:

. . . I'm a tennis player, not a Negro tennis player. I have never set myself up as a champion of the Negro race. Someone once wrote that the difference between me and Jackie Robinson is that he thrived on his role as a Negro battling for equality whereas I shy away from it. That man read me correctly. I shy away from it because it would be dishonest of me to pretend to a feeling I don't possess. There doesn't seem to be much question that Jackie always saw baseball success as a step forward for the Negro people, and he aggressively fought to make his ability pay off in social advances as well as fat paychecks. I'm not insensitive to the great value to our people of what Jackie did. If he hadn't paved the way, I probably never would have got my chance. But I have to do it my way. I try not to flaunt my success as a Negro success. It's all right for others to make a fuss over my role as a trail blazer, and of course, I realize its importance to others as well as to myself, but I can't do it . . . the press resents my refusal to turn my tennis achievements into a rousing crusade for racial equality. Brass bands, 76 trombones, and all. I won't do it. I feel strongly that I can do more good my way than I could by militant crusading. I want my success to speak for itself as an advertisement for my race. (Gibson, 11:159)

In professional golf, Charlie Sifford, now socializes in locker rooms that never before saw a dark face except on the shoeshine boy. Golf was one of the most segregated major sports in the United States. The Professional Golfers Association removed its Caucasian-only clause in 1961, ten years after most pro sports were fully integrated. (50:56) In 1969 Charlie Sifford, a twenty year victim of "apartheid" in pro golf won the Los Angeles Open receiving \$20,000 for his victory. He became the first Negro, however briefly, to lead the money winners on the pro tour and the first man inducted into the Watts Hall of Fame. (50:56) His stamina allowed him to outlive, outwait, and out-golf Jim Crow and the Professional Golfers Association. Mr. Sifford should be emulated more for his endurance than his victories, more his persistence than his superior game. (Johnson, 81:58) Charlie's determination and patience

opened the gates for other blackmen. Presently, though the majority of the Negroes seen on the pro circuit are still caddies, this being due not so much to the state of the sport as to the general social and economic conditions of America today. (Johnson, 81:58) Although the United States Supreme Court ruled a decade ago that public courses must be open to all, reality is often more complex than legality.

It has become the fashionable thing to say that he (Charlie Sifford) is to golf what Jackie Robinson was to baseball--human spearhead iron-willed hero, rugged pioneer who dashed down the white man's barricades to let blackmen play the game big-league style. (Johnson, 81:60)

There is a contrast between the availability for opportunity between golf and baseball. Baseball has a wealth of Negro talent in other leagues whereas golf has none. Baseball allowed the Negro entrance because he helped teams win, and winners drew crowds and dollars. The Negro golfer carries no lobby. There is little exploitation in golf as there are too few blacks capable of tournament play. (Johnson, 81:60) After Jackie Robinson integrated the major leagues, other black stars soon became numerous. Seven years after the PGA eliminated discriminatory practices there were just ten Negroes on tour with Sifford having won a top-class tournament. (Johnson, 81:63) Charlie comments that it will probably be five years or more before any Negro golfer can join the ranks of the top ten moneymakers over a full season. It is not the lack of talent, rather the opportunity. As Sifford says, "White people have been playing golf for a hundred goddamn years, man. Negroes have had a tough enough time just getting into school, let alone playing golf." (50:56)

Discrimination is present on the golfer's circuit. Although Sifford

innovated integration on the greens the second-class status of the black golfer has been unchanged. Country club golf is still the white man's domain. Few black men have the inside key into the circles of affluence and influence that allow entrance into the country club elite. One sees the difficulty the Negro has to get accepted, to gain sponsorship and receive sound golf instruction. Charlie Sifford, now beyond his prime, relates how he wasted ten talented years with the bigoted P.G.A. bastion and Jim Crow. Perhaps Sifford's own weary words say it best, "Nothing ain't ever as good for a black man as it ought to be." (Johnson, 81:69)

The Negro is a social phenomenon within sport. His physical capabilities seem to be superior to his Caucasian competitors. Does he have more rhythm? Faster foot? Quicker moves? Innate abilities that allow him to excel? Social scientists believe the Negro is different, and his peculiarity is due to sociological and psychological forces arising from his life in the United States. (Henderson, 12:3)

The explanation for black pre-eminence in sport is social not scientific. The Negro does not have more muscles; he has fewer opportunities. A talented white boy can often decide whether to channel his various abilities into business, a profession or a sport. A talented black is rarely exposed to the first two choices, so he works that much harder to run, jump or throw better than anyone else. In American track and field, Negroes excel mainly in sprints and jumping events. Olympic sprinter John Carlos of San Jose offers a simple explanation. "Everything is hustle and bustle for a young black. Run to the bus, run with the other kids, run from the cops. Maybe that's how we get so good at sprinting." (Axthelm, 45:56)

Superior black performance in athletics may have been caused by two factors:

1) individual recognition and 2) economic necessity. The Negro has had to overcome many discriminatory obstacles in order to earn a living. Lacking necessary education for successful advancement he has found that proficiency at "play" offers substantial remuneration. (Ebony, 9:339)

Black people are playing in mud and rain and snow and everything else, Harry Edwards says, and from the time that they are able to dribble a basketball they are out jumping and shooting and running. Crackers don't do this. They ride bicycles. There is a difference in ability but, this doesn't necessarily mean that this is an innate physical difference, indigenous to the races. It is a matter of cultural environment, cultural development. (Olsen, 28:14-15)

Judith R. Williams and Roland B. Scott studied the motor development of two groups of Negro children from different socioeconomic classes. Their hypothesis stated that motor development is not a racial characteristic, but rather a function of the individual's environment. The investigation involved one hundred babies from the Washington, D. C. area who were divided into two groups on the basis of the socioeconomic status of their parents. Results showed that motor acceleration was significantly higher in the low socioeconomic group as compared to the high socioeconomic group. Also there were significant differences discovered in motor behavior related to varied methods of infant care. Williams and Scott concluded that motor acceleration is not a function of ethnic inheritance. Environmental factors therefore, are more influential for the Negro's skill development than "so-called anthropometric advantages." (Sage, 33:247)

Tom Hawkins of the Los Angeles Lakers, said:

From an early age you identify with people who have been successful . . . . Negroes identify with people in sports and entertainment. Let's take it from the social stand point. When you're a kid you want something to do that will relax you and be rewarding. But years ago there were many places the

Negro couldn't go. Restaurants, and places of entertainment. So if I'm not at one of those places maybe I'm out playing football or baseball or shooting at a basket. All those hours devoted to sports are bound to show up in differences in players. (Henderson, 12:4)

For countless Negro youngsters the choice has been virtually the same; aimlessness, unending poverty, possibly a life of crime, or sports. Athletics allow black youngsters to confront whites and prove their equality or superiority. Jackie Robinson's teammate, Jim Gilliam, reflects back on his early days in Nashville when "there were barriers--we couldn't go to school or sit at lunch counters with whites, but on the field we were equals." (102:130) Sport is the charismatic proving ground for the poor black youngster from a broken home, who cannot make it in school or hold a steady job. On the diamond, gridiron, gymnasium floor or playfield he finds respect with his ability to hit home runs, make touchdowns, dunk baskets, and serve tennis balls. Although "whitey" will not sit beside him in a bus, share a table with him in a restaurant, or live beside him, applause is given to the black boy who makes a good run, KO's a white opponent in the ring, or knocks down all the pins for a perfect 300 game. (Bucher, 53:21) In sport the best man wins.

Most Negro athletes are from the low socioeconomic classes. Excellence in sports provides an opportunity for Negroes to escape the poverty of the slums and ghettos. The desire to escape from their childhood environments and enter the American mainstream have caused many Negroes to approach sports with greater motivation to excel than that found in the middle classes. (Sage, 33:247) A black scout at the recent Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association tourney in Greensboro commented:



Let's face it, a lot of white kids live with the country club influence. They can spend their summers swimming or playing golf or tennis. That kind of choice just doesn't exist in the ghetto. The black athlete is hungrier . . . . Look at Jerry Sloan of the Chicago Bulls. His ghetto was a cornfield. He was a poor white kid from the farm. But the common denominator--poverty--was still there. He played basketball day and night to get away from those conditions. Elvin Hayes is the black parallel to Sloan. He practiced by himself on a Louisiana dirt farm. But what of the rich kids who have made it big in pro ball?

Oh, there are a few, said the Scout. They're the ones who are really dedicated and willing to pay the price. But that's a rare quality. I'll tell you something. When we know a kid's family has money, we don't really want him. (125:B-5)

Perhaps Cassius Clay, former heavyweight champion of the world, explained on the eve of his victory over Sonny Liston what motivates the Negro athlete.

. . . A Southern colored boy (Clay) has made \$1 million just as he turns 22. I don't think it's bragging to say I'm something a little special. Where do you think I would be next week if I didn't know how to shout and holler and make the public sit up and take notice? I would be poor, for one thing, and I would probably be down in Louisville, Kentucky my home town washing windows or running an elevator and saying "yes suh" and "no suh" and knowing my place. Instead of that, I'm saying I'm one of the highest paid athletes in the world, which is true, and that I'm the greatest fighter in the world, which I hope and pray is true. (Davis, 8:789)

Sports bridges the ghetto with the rest of the world. The question is, for how many?

The number is terribly small. At the most sports has led a few thousand Negroes into a better life while substituting a meaningless dream for hundreds of thousands of other Negroes. It has helped to perpetuate an oppressive system. For every Willie Mays or Bob Hayes there are countless Negroes who obviously had abundant will and determination to succeed, but who dedicated their childhoods and their energies to baseball gloves and shoulder pads. If there were other ways out and up, they were blinded to them by the success of a few sports celebrities. These are the Negro doctors who never were, the Negro lawyers who are desperately needed, the Negro city planners who never existed. This has been the major effect of sports on the Negro, and it overrides all others. (Olsen, 28:11-12)

The Horatio Alger of the sport world has been played by Willie Mays, Bill Russell,

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Althea Gibson, Floyd Patterson and countless more as every major sport in America has its heroes who were recruited from humble social origins and rose to unimagined heights of social success. (Kenyon, 16:101) Are those prominent individuals an exception rather than the rule? Is sport tolerant, non-discriminatory, and truly democratic? Is the Negro viewed in sports as an American first and a problem second? Is the black athlete a second-class citizen on the athletic field? To what extent does sport involvement facilitate upward social mobility? In an attempt to objectively answer the preceding questions and study the black athlete in sports the following inquiry will deal with social stratification in America and the methods of mobility within society.

## CHAPTER III

## SPORT AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

## THE NEGRO AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

All societies establish a hierarchical system of moral and material valuations which relate people to goals. Social stratification provides motivation, and meaning to life and is the permissive sanction for what Mercer describes as "papable ambiguity and ambivalence." (Merton, 24:146, 147) It is necessary to understand the theory of social stratification as a construct in order to understand the theory and development of social mobility. Social class and caste are the two main contemporary forms of stratification. There has been great controversy among sociologists as to whether American society manifests a caste-class structure. Lloyd Warner (129), a noted social scientist believes that class structure is maintained together with a caste setting in America, particularly in the Deep South. He defines both caste and class as:

A theoretical arrangement of the people of a given group in an order in which the privileges, duties, obligations, opportunities, etc. are unequally distributed between the groups which are considered to be higher and lower. There are social sanctions which tend to maintain this unequal distribution. (Kahl, 15:25-27)

Caste and class are differentiated by the degrees of structured rigidity.

Social class consists of a myriad of components sometimes tightly and sometimes loosely articulated: wealth, power and status not to mention such critical complicating factors as status discrepancies and minority ethnic positions. (Hodges, 14:248)

A social class is a more flexible arrangement including individuals and groups of both sexes, all ages and sharing similar socioeconomic circumstances and ranks in which status is achieved. (Himes, 13:286) In class, intergroup movement and interclass marriage between lower and higher echelons is sanctioned. A class society distributes rights and privileges, duties and obligations, unequally among its inferior and superior grades. The very nature of the class organization allows and promotes values for movement vertically up and down the social ladder. In technical terminology this form of social climbing is called social mobility. (Warner, 129:234) A caste organization is antithetical to class, with its inflexible structure prohibiting movement between groups and intergroup marriage. Caste is a more rigid hierarchical system composed of individuals, and groups with similar social, economic, and status characteristics in which social rank is ascribed and lifelong. Exogamy is severely prohibited. This organizational grouping provides limited opportunities and means of achieving status within caste restrictions. (Himes, 13:286) Mobility is shifted at the caste-color line. Warner believes that achieved status results from a combination of variables including possessions, interaction patterns, occupational activities and value orientations manifest in style of behavior. (Kahl, 15:25-27)

Warner says:

Money must be translated into socially approved behavior and possessions, and they in turn must be translated into intimate participation with and acceptance by members of a superior class. (Kahl, 15:25-27)

A research team under the guidance of Warner analyzed the social structure of the Deep South. In comparing caste and class distinctions they found that



Negroes and Whites constitute two separate, superior and inferior groupings divided by more than class or ethnic distinctions. Mixed marriage is not socially sanctioned between castes while members of two classes are condoned in marriage. Negroes cannot move out of the lower to the higher white levels, while members of a lower white class are able to do so. Negroes appear born with the blackness inferiority. Concluding, Warner adapted the definition accepted by many anthropologists: "that a system of prestige distinction between groups that prevented mobility and intermarriage was a system of 'caste'." (Kahl, 15:243-247) Warner says further,

. . . that a black skin does not get lighter through time, Negroes remain Negroes and although they have as a group won increasing advantages in our society, entering new levels of education and occupation they remain identified as a separate group. Individuals within it cannot take advantage of their increasing culture to become less Negro. Caste results in immobility and endogamy. (Kahl, 15:243-247)

The color-caste system of values and behavior places all blacks in an inferior status. Regardless of money achieved, or prestige and power accumulated, or manners and behavior properly acquired, the status of lower caste members is fixed. Mobility may occur between the classes of the separate Negro and white castes but not between castes. (Warner, 38:20-21)

An actual caste system may be said to exist when an ineradicable stigma of inferiority such as color marks a distinct cleavage between two groups and individuals of the lower status are never accepted in full social equality by the upper group. . . . Actually only the Negro of all American minorities finds the line impassable, and he alone may therefore, strictly speaking, be said to have been assigned to an inferior caste. In ante bellum days there was a much heavier concentration of Negroes in the inferior classes, a concentration so great as to afford an aspect of truth to the allegation that all white people were superior to all Negroes in worth and status. Today no minority of colored or European origin is so undifferentiated as to warrant such a generalization. (Young, 40:581-582)

Several theorists have diagrammed the caste-class structure in America today. Dr. DuBois' description, Figure I, is stated in terms of absolute numbers after the manner of the ordinary population pyramid; and secondly in terms of percentages at each social level, after the pattern of a box diagram. The pyramid and the line are drawn hypothetically, but the general shape leaves obvious inferences. The pyramid is heavier at the bottom on the Negro side than on the white side and the line is a diagonal curve, rather than a straight line diagonal. The weakness of these diagrams is the assumption that the class structures of the two castes are exactly comparable, which they are not. Many whites tend to look down upon blacks regardless of equal education, occupation, and income rather than across the caste-line. Bigotry and white racism is transformed into the institutionalized form of the caste line, segregation. (Myrdal, 26:693)

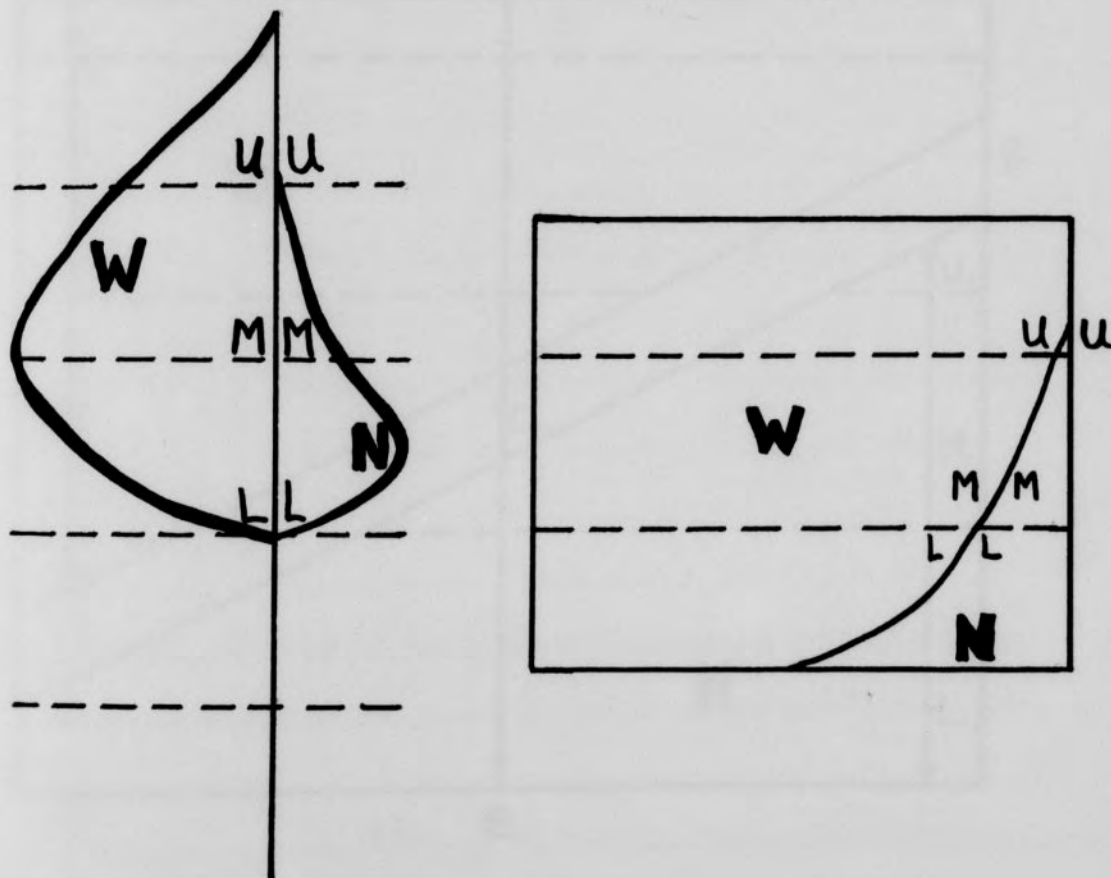
Warner also diagrammed the social configuration of caste-class as portrayed in Figure II. The diagonal lines separate the lower Negro caste (N) from the upper white caste (W), and the two broken lines in each segment separate the three general classes (upper, middle, and lower) in each caste from each other. The two double headed arrows indicate that movement up and down the class ladders in each caste can and does take place and is socially sanctioned, but that there is no movement or marriage between the two segments. The diagonal arrangement of the parallel lines separating the two castes shows the skewness created by the conflict of caste and class in the South. As the vertical distance of the Negro group has been extended during the years, due to

FIGURE I

## DUBOIS' CLASS - CASTE - CONFIGURATION (Myrdal, 26:692-693)

Absolute numbers of white and negroes at each level of social status.

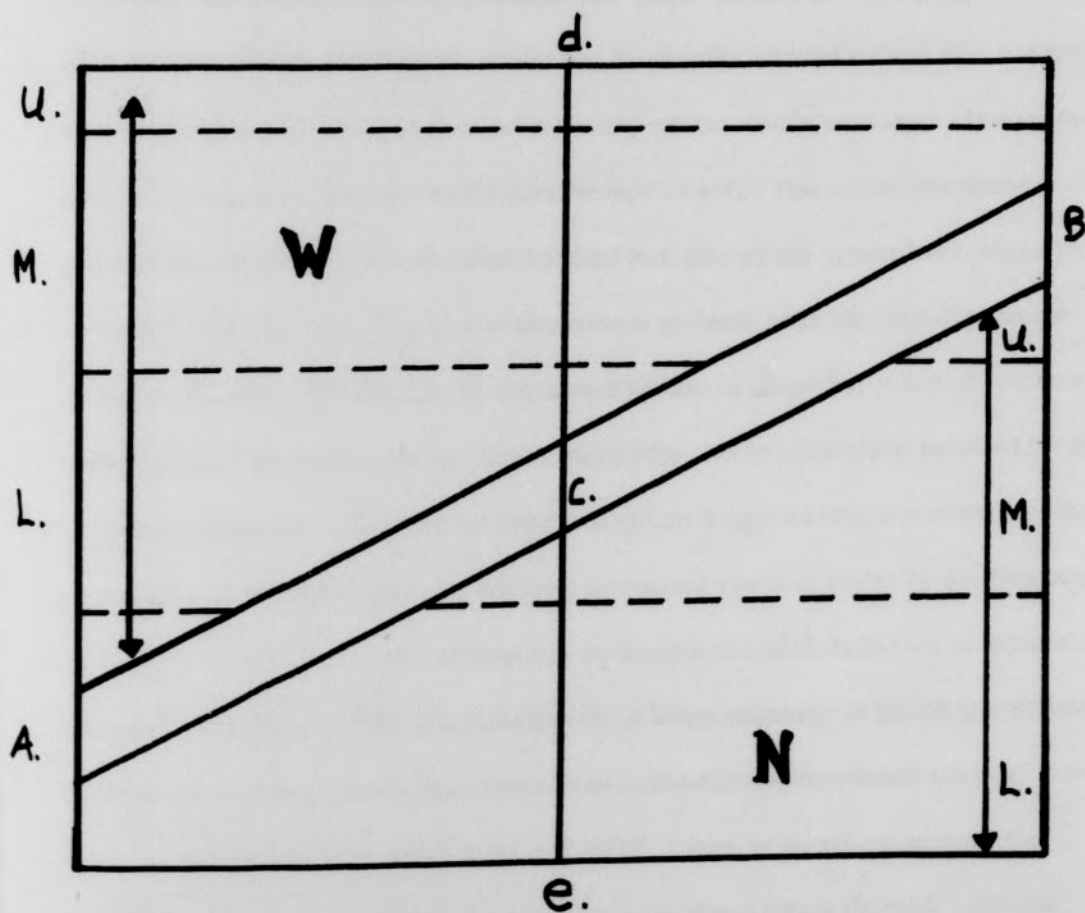
Percentage of whites and negroes at each level of social status.



LEGEND: W= White, N= Negro, U=Upper Class, M=Middle Class, L=Lower Class

FIGURE II

WARNER'S CLASS - CASTE - CONFIGURATION (Warner, 129:235-236)



LEGEND: W=White, N=Negro, U=Upper Class, M=Middle Class, L=Lower Class

educational advancement, and the elimination of legal segregation barriers, the top Negro layer has been pushed higher and higher. This has swung the caste line on its axis (c) so that the top Negro group is higher in class than the lower white groups and is so recognized. If this process continues as it seems to be doing, it is possible and probable that the lines AB might move on the axis (c) until they approximate the hypothetical line (de). Should the line (AB) reach the position (de) the class situation would not be greatly altered except that the top Negro group would be equivalent with the top white, while the lower classes in each of the parallel groups would also be equivalent. The social skewness created by the present class-caste conflict has placed the upperclass Negro in a difficult position. The Negro who has moved or been born into the uppermost group of his caste is superior to the lower whites in class but inferior in caste. Although he is at the top of the Negro hierarchy, he is constantly rebuked by the caste line. (Warner, 129:236) Warner's diagram suggests that the caste line between the races is rotating, permitting increased vertical mobility for Negroes and an increased approximation of Negroes to the stratified distribution of whites. The social stratification of the Negro indicates a large segment of the Negro populace in the lower strata. Secondly, there is an indication of increased vertical mobility of Negroes within their caste and third, there is pressure against the "caste barrier" separating the races, but little penetration thereof. (Broom, 5:488-489)

Although sociologists are not in complete agreement as to whether American Negroes are a social class or caste the fact remains that social



ascent is presently confined within their separate grouping. In recent studies of minority relations Charles F. Marden and Gladys Meyer find that the caste concept fits the situation of the Negro while George Simpson and J. Milton Yinger believe the theory to be inapplicable. Myrdal states class distinction is a result of restriction of free competition, causing only partial social integration. The upper classes maintain social monopolies that bind the lower strata and cause class rigidity. Family background instead of, or in addition to merit, ownership of wealth and income, national origin and religion are several of the cited monopolies. He discusses the causal relationship of these factors and the integration of them to form a class system. (Myrdal, 26:667-688) Education is a definite determinant of mobility as it prepares for higher occupations and incomes. Whereas Warner believes that participation in cliques, clubs, and associations are the most important determinants of one's class position, Myrdal suggests that these social engagements are a result of the previously cited factors and enhances their significance. In distinguishing caste from class Myrdal describes the caste stratification as such a drastic restriction of free competition that the individual in the lower caste cannot by any means change his status. Within each caste is a class system and restricted free competition. While class lines are flexible, caste division is definitely clear-cut. Caste lines are defined somewhat by law and more sharply by custom, whereas class boundaries are indefinite. Myrdal (26:667-688) conceives of the class order as a social continuum. Arbitrary measures for class division are customarily referred to as upper- middle- and lower classes. Warner divides

the conventional three classes each into two. Actual class stratification differs between rural and urban communities, between different regions of the country and between the white and Negro caste. (Myrdal, 26:667-688)

The caste barrier has often widened the differences between black and white. Maintenance of the color line has been the attempt of white supremacists to keep "the Negro in his place."

The color line has become the bulwark against the whites' own adherence to the American Creed, against trends of improvement in Negroes' education: against other social trends which stress the irrationality of the caste system and against the demands of the Negroes. (Myrdal, 26:667-688)

Racial segregation is fact, although no longer legally theory: its discriminatory affects hold the black boy back, socially choking him. The etiquette of ritual avoidance and racial inferiority still governs black-white relations in much of American living. (Himes, 13:289)

#### SOCIAL MOBILITY

Much has been said about the American Creed, the American dream, and the United States as a land of opportunity with an "open class system." As Leonard Reissman has observed, the belief in social mobility holds a strategic place among American values. It is a hub around which much of what Americans believe revolves, whether it is shouted as a platitude or cynically rejected. The creed of egalitarianism means not only that we are social equals, though not economic equals, but even more to the point, that the class structure is open and available. The positions at the top are open to those who have the talents, aptitudes, and whatever else it takes to reach them. At the same time, of course we must be prepared to accept the corollary. Those who do not reach the top do not deserve to. Americans of all classes have held to this belief and have made it legend. The honor roll is filled with the names of heroes who give substance to the legend, and in every period there is always a fresh example of someone who has gone from rags to riches. The legend continues to remain alive and real, to the cynics as to the patriots. (Kenyon, 16:101)

Inequality prevails in all aspects of living; its very presence encourages the movement of individuals in society and social change. Social class and mobility are directly connected with the entire institutional and social structure of this country. (Mack, 23:1-5) The stratification system in America recognizes the possibility that individuals and groups may change their relative positions. Mobility is a characteristic feature of the American class system.

The term social mobility refers to the process of permanent movement that is socially significant. Social mobility involves the breaking or modification of old social ties and the establishment of new ones. Social mobility may occur as an aspect of either individual experience or group experience. (Himes, 13:300-306)

The concept of mobility is difficult to measure as it is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon. The degree to which sport participation enhances social success is also complicated due to the source variation of mobility. Tumin (36:88) discusses seven dimensions of social mobility. First, there are the directions in which movement can take place. It can occur in anyone of three directions: from lower to higher; from higher to lower, or between two positions at the same level. Movement from stratum to stratum is vertical mobility. The transition of an individual from one social position to another within a single stratum upward or downward is horizontal movement. This research is concerned with the vertical upward movement of the black athlete.

A second dimension of social mobility is that of time. That is, changes can occur from one generation to another, (intergenerational or career mobility), or within one generation (intragenerational or career mobility), which is the perspective considered within this writing. One can be concerned with the amount

of time, inter-, or intragenerational that it takes for persons to move from one set of positions to another.

A third view is the mechanism of mobility. Persons acquire positions of stratification by ascription, maturation, validation and achievement. Sport is a mode of achievement, with consideration that the black athlete's status is ascribed due to black caste.

Another aspect of social mobility is the specific kind of status change. Reference may be made to occupational mobility, educational mobility, prestige mobility and/or changes in material resources or power. (Kenyon, 16:102)

A fifth consideration of this social phenomenon is the mobile unit. Movement patterns may involve individuals, families, peer groups, strata or larger social gatherings. This inquiry deals primarily with mobility of the individual.

A sixth dimension "concerns the distinction between objective and subjective changes in status." (Tumin, 36:88) An objective aspect would be a measurement in the change in annual income which is a more accurate indicator than subjective change in status, dealing with change in an individual's feelings. Do Negroes feel that salary increase, and athletic achievement are desirable? What is the status of the black athlete in his community? What may be considered as an upward movement or improvement for some may be viewed by others as no improvement at all or even a change for the worse.

The principal modes of social movement in this country are through the use of money, education, occupation, talent, philanthropy, sex and marriage.

(Warner, 38:21-23) Although economic factors are of prime importance they are not unique determinants of mobility. The most frequently used indicator has been change in occupation and secondly income evaluation. (Mack, 23:1-5) Tumin (36:92-93) supports school enrollment as the most important determinant of upward mobility from manual occupations.

. . . that education is increasingly the key to social mobility becomes the more consequential when we recall the overwhelming failure of lower class children to pursue schooling as far as their needs and talents allow. (Hodges, 14:260)

Warner also believes that education is the necessary route toward upward movement in society and that social-economic factors must be translated into acceptable class behavior.

The mere possession of money is insufficient for gaining and keeping a higher social position. This is equally true of all other forms of mobility. In every case there must be social acceptance. Money must be translated into socially approved behavior and possessions, and they in turn must be translated into intimate participation with and acceptance by members of a superior class. Education is now competing with economic mobility as the principal route to success. (Warner, 38:21-23)

Mobility is created by free public education particularly at the secondary and college levels. It is enhanced by occupations based upon skills requiring training rather than ownership of property, and is restricted further by laws, regulation, and customs. (Ogburn, 27:189-191)

#### SPORT AS A VEHICLE OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Although no definitive study of social mobility in the sport milieu has been conducted, several social scientists have investigated the role of sport as a mechanism of mobility for lower class youth. Hodges states in his text on social



stratification "that college football has functioned as a highly effective status elevator to thousands of boys from blue-collar ethnic backgrounds." (16:104) However, this broad generalization was not supported by any evidence. Havighurst and Neugarten assert that, "Athletic prowess combined with education often provides a very good base for mobility in a lower class boy." (Kenyon, 16:104) This statement is substantiated only by a single case study. Riesman and Denny comment after examination of early All-American football listings,

There is an element of class identification running through American football since its earliest days, and the ethnic origins of players contain ample invitations to the making of football. Most observers would be inclined to agree that the arrival of names like Kelley and Kipke on the annual All-American list was taken by the Flanagans and the Webers as the achievement of a lower-class aspiration to be among the best at an upper-class sport. (Kenyon, 16:104)

Further research done by the Assistant Athletic Director of the University of Pennsylvania and the school's lettermen relates sport, education and mobility to the broader occupational structure of society. (Litchfield, 93:66-80)

J. Clyde Barton spent more than a year tracing the backgrounds and present status of 1,678 Pitt lettermen whose performances date from 1900-1960. He sent a questionnaire to each athlete and received answers from 1,391 or 83 per cent. The survey indicated no less than 37 per cent or 517 of the men had gone beyond their baccalaureates to earn advanced degrees. Barton comments:

. . . we could go on citing distinguished beneficiaries of the sports system, yet how would that prove that assistance of athletes serves a legitimate function on a college campus? Obviously there is no proof. But this much we know from our survey to be a fact: the overwhelming majority of our lettermen have made something of themselves. . . .

In so far as occupations serve as rough indicators of success, we judge that the incidence of success, both pecuniary and ennobling, among Pitt athletes has been remarkably high. (Litchfield, 93:80)

Other sociological studies of professional athletes give further inference to mobility and sport. Gregory, Andreano, and Charnofsky studied the income and educational levels of major league baseball players. Charnofsky's data when compared with that of Andreano "may indicate . . . an important trend toward increasing college education to major league baseball players." (Kenyon, 16:105) On the basis of data collected from 75 major league players in the summer of 1965 Charnofsky said that, ". . . only 3 per cent of the sample failed to graduate from high school, while 17 per cent were college educated and 58 per cent had attended college . . ." for one semester or more. (Kenyon, 16:105) Professor Schafer and his colleagues recently investigated the relationships between athletic participation and academic achievement, recording in the *American Journal of Sociology*, 1968. They found that:

A greater percentage of athletes than non-athletes expect to complete four years of college among working-class rather than middle class boys; among boys with less, rather than more parental encouragement; and among boys in the lower, rather than the upper half of their graduating class.

They conclude:

It would seem, then, that interscholastic athletics serves a democratizing or equalizing function. It represents a vehicle for upward mobility, especially of those otherwise not likely to complete college. And the data suggest that, at least as far as participants are concerned, athletics fosters rather than interferes with the educational goal of sending a maximum number of youth to college. (Kenyon, 16:107)

Professor Luscen has completed substantial investigation regarding social mobility among the youth in Germany. He studied 1,880 sportsmen in various

clubs, and found that 14 per cent were upwardly mobile while 7 per cent were downwardly mobile. He also discovered that sport seemed to be an important means of instilling middle class values in upwardly mobile lower class youth. Leadership positions in the clubs were held by half of the upwardly mobile sportsmen while not a single prominent office was occupied by downwardly mobile individuals. (Kenyon, 16:107)

From the studies cited, sport may be viewed as a positive mechanism of mobility. Athletic involvement enhances upward mobility in several ways. The early acquisition of skill proficiency allows an individual opportunity into professional sports. Adolescents may become boxers, basketball and/or professional baseball players with a minimal amount of formal education. Secondly, athletic participation enhances educational opportunities. Many highly skilled individuals are offered athletic scholarships from colleges and universities. "Collegiate sports competition, in turn may influence the attainment of academic degrees and/or the acquisition of marketable sport skills." (Kenyon, 16:108) Thirdly, athletic participation may lead to various forms of "occupational sponsorship."

Thus, a successful street fighter may acquire a promoter and be groomed for the Golden Gloves Tournament which in turn may lead to a professional boxing career. Or a wealthy alumnus may sponsor a college sport star through such means as summer jobs and upon graduation give the athlete a position in his corporation. Or the successful athlete may marry into wealth by using his popularity to establish courtship relations with well-to-do coeds. (Kenyon, 16:108)

Fourth, sport involvement leads to the positive development of attitudes and behavior patterns valued in the larger occupational world. Qualities such as

leadership, and sportsmanship necessary for successful human relations may be developed through sporting competition.

In summary, black skin ascribes social standing. Negroes remain socially inferior even when educational and occupational advancements are made. Inter-caste mobility is denied because black is readily identifiable and the belief that race is an unalterable biological fact of inferiority pervades our thought. Segregation pitifully wastes a most valuable human resource. Martin Luther King comments:

Negroes are still at the bottom of the economic ladder. They live within two concentric circles of segregation. One imprisons them on the basis of color, while the other confines them within a separate culture of poverty. The average Negro is born into want and deprivation. His struggle to escape his circumstances is hindered by color discrimination. He is deprived of normal education and normal social and economic opportunities. When he seeks opportunity, he is told, in effect, to lift himself by his bootstraps, advice which does not take into account the fact that he is barefoot. (King, 17:23)

Contrary to romantic myth, sport is not the panacea for the racial ills of a bed-ridden America. Let us not be so naive as to believe sport is the human savior of wayward youth, or the reformer of human bias. Yet it is one of the most responsive integrating mechanisms presently active in the social revolution of this century. The Negro's background of "toil and sweat and battling with life for mere survival fits him aptly for the competition and conflict inherent in sport." (Sage, 33:275)

Only in sports, to such high degree has the wondering lament-- 'How long, oh Lord, how long'? becomes passe. Total all that sports mean today to all other Americans, and you'll find that sports mean still more to Negroes. It is like saying that sports are an important part of the beginning of total freedom. (Sage, 33:277)

Sport allows the "opportunity" to compete equally.

For the Negro athletes in America, this is the Golden Era, the halcyon day. Today, more Negro athletes are playing American games as Americans and athletes first, and as Negroes second, than ever before in the history of sports. They are setting more records, making more money, calling more plays, enjoying louder applause; they are more in demand than they were during any previous era. Consequently, their total contributions to sports in performances and volumes of thrills for the fans are greater than ever. (Sage, 33:274)

The black athlete is able to utilize his athletic ability to achieve financial success, educational reference, identity, and status. Jimmy Brown receives one of the largest checks in football. (48:166) In 1967 of the seven big leaguers earning \$100,000 or more a year, five, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, Frank Robinson, Roberto Clemente, and Juan Marichal, were Negroes. (132:71) Lew Alcindor, while a rookie for the Milwaukee Bucks, signed a \$1.4 million contract, the biggest known contract in sports history. (48:166) Floyd Patterson is thought to be a millionaire. Black gladiators purchase luxuries now that they seldom were able to afford. In contrast to other areas of endeavor, the Negro in sport is seldom "the first fired" and "the last hired." Slaves of the past are now the foundations of our Olympic Teams, Halls of Fame, and World Championships.

Thousands of Negroes go through college on athletic scholarship.

Hopefully we may concur with Byron S. Hollinshead's observation that,

our (educational) structure is concrete evidence of the deep concern among Americans for a fluid casteless society, in which it should be made possible for everyone to proceed as far as his perserverance and abilities will carry him. (75:6-7)

As the major sport leagues expand so also will non-white opportunity, and social barriers will continuously be broken. Sport does allow mobility from



black lower class to the echelon of black bourgeoisie. Sport is a forceful integrator between castes, enabling the black athlete the possibility of social ascent into the larger white community.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE BLACK ATHLETE IN AMERICA TODAY

The black athlete is like the black poet in that he is able to do something--in this case on the field, --that the Negro is not able to do off the field, or in life in general. (Olsen, 28:18)

The Negro press eagerly publicizes "the first" Negro accomplishments particularly in those areas formerly monopolized by whites. His achievements have relatively higher rating in the black community than in the society at large. The entire upper class gains prestige in the black community due to the bourgeoisie athlete's acquisition of white peoples' education and wealth. The black athlete has progressed far beyond the "traditional Negro job" bringing pride and hope to his minority brothers. (Myrdal, 26:734-735) As the late Professor E. Franklin Frazier phrased it:

The Negro ball players have become symbols of achievement, symbols of Negro participation in a white world; and with their high incomes and conspicuous consumption they are an important part of the bourgeoisie elite. (Boyle, 3:131)

Frazier places sports, with baseball in the lead, as the prime topic of Negro conversation. He wrote in Black Bourgeoisie:

Once the writer heard a Negro doctor who was prominent "socially" say that he would rather lose a patient than have his favorite baseball team lose a game. This was an extreme expression of the relative value of professional work and recreation among the black bourgeoisie. At the same time it is indicative of the value which many Negro professional men and women, including college professors, place upon sports. Except when they are talking within the narrow field of their professions, their conversations are generally limited to sports--baseball and

football. They follow religiously the scores of the various teams and the achievements of all the players. For hours they listen to the radio accounts of sports and watch baseball and football games on television. (Boyle, 3:132)

Wilson Record, a sociologist at Sacramento State College discovered while doing field research in Chicago, that those Negroes playing the popular numbers game, an illegal lottery based on pari-mutual return, would get a number to play from the Negro batting averages listed in the Chicago Daily Defender. In Harlem the numbers players consulted books interpreting dreams and offering the reader numbers of chance. The significance of baseball in black contemporary culture is denoted in the following statements from such books. The Lucky Star Dream Book commented: "To dream that you play this game (baseball) denotes safety of your affairs and a happy reunion among your neighbors, 100." In the Success Dream Book Professor Dr. Herbert wrote, "To dream of playing baseball is a sign that you will live to a good old age, and then die happily, 945. To see others play this game is a sign of peace and satisfaction, 567." (Boyle, 3:135)

Negro ball players are glamour personalities. Their status in the black community is potential for powerful leadership. (Myrdal, 26:734-735)

There is a growing demand that the black athlete take part in the affairs of the Negro community, that he use his prestige, the position he's acquired, to make himself a force in the improvement of the position of all Negroes. (Olsen, 28:22)

Bob Wheeler, assistant superintendent of Kansas City public schools comments further: "Negroes are apt to show hostility to a Negro athlete who doesn't take full advantage of his opportunities." (Olsen, 28:22) The black community respects those competitors who do not confine their activities merely to the

field. Militant Harry Edwards, states:

As long as you have black athletes making it to the top and then shutting up like Willie Mays or Jesse Owens or Joe Louis, well then athletics has done very little for the black community. It has helped black individuals to delude themselves, this is all. But when you have people speaking out like Jackie Robinson, Bill Russell, and Oscar Robertson you begin to feel the importance of sports to the black community. When you have people like Satch Sanders of the Celtics going out and getting a million-dollar grant from the federal government to revitalize housing in the black community of Boston--well they didn't give it to him because he was some Joe off the street, but because he was Satch Sanders and because he had made himself a public figure and had access to the white man's media and public-opinion forces. He didn't have to speak out. He could have stayed home and been a Tom like the others. (Olsen, 28:22)

Many prominent athletes are members and contributors to the NAACP. At times of need this national organization often telegraphs ballplayers asking for financial support. (Cozens, 7:134) Comparing the responsibilities of Negro ballplayers and entertainers Professor Frazier comments:

A baseball player is attached to conventional worlds. An entertainer dwelt in "the House of Satan" so to speak where anything went and ties were broken in the process. But the ballplayer did not. After all, said Frazier, baseball is an American sport with American respectability. (Cozens, 7:134)

In 1966 William Brink and the Newsweek staff made an in-depth study of the Negro revolution in America. One of their polls dealt with the present prominent community leaders and their degree of acknowledgement by the black public. Among the fourteen assessed leaders were Jackie Robinson and Floyd Patterson. On the following page are excerpts from the poll showing a comparison of the ratings of Robinson and Patterson with some other selected prominent Negroes. Both athletes are well-known by their brothers and admired as group spokesmen. (Brink, 4:22) The status and glamour of the Negro athlete is characteristic of a

TABLE I  
 NEGROES ASSESS 14 INDIVIDUAL LEADERS\*

	TOTAL RANK AND FILE	NON- SOUTH	SOUTH %	LEADERS %
<b>MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.</b>				
Positive	88	93	86	95
Negative	4	3	4	4
Not Sure	8	4	10	1
<b>JACKIE ROBINSON</b>				
Positive	80	85	76	82
Negative	8	9	7	14
Not Sure	12	6	17	4
<b>JAMES MEREDITH</b>				
Positive	79	84	75	81
Negative	6	6	6	18
Not Sure	15	10	19	1
<b>MEDGAR EVERS</b>				
Positive	78	81	76	92
Negative	3	3	2	2
Not Sure	19	16	22	6
<b>HARRY BELAFONTE</b>				
Positive	54	64	47	77
Negative	10	13	8	19
Not Sure	36	23	45	4
<b>ADAM CLAYTON POWELL</b>				
Positive	51	53	50	52
Negative	23	28	18	44
Not Sure	26	19	32	4
<b>FLOYD PATTERSON</b>				
Positive	53	53	54	50
Negative	20	26	15	32
Not Sure	27	21	31	18



TABLE I (Continued)

	TOTAL RANK AND FILE	NON- SOUTH	SOUTH %	LEADERS %
<b>JAMES BALDWIN</b>				
Positive	42	46	39	69
Negative	8	10	8	21
Not Sure	50	44	53	10
<b>ELIJAH MUHAMMAD</b>				
Positive	15	20	11	17
Negative	35	48	26	74
Not Sure	50	32	63	9

\*adapted from (Brink, 4:120-121)

young culture.

Negroes are only following a common American pattern, which as usual their caste status leads them to exaggerate. Although the possibilities and the temptations have been so great, glamour personalities have usually not exploited Negroes or the Negro problem. (Myrdal, 26:734-735)

Youth love sports heroes. Black and white alike follow athletic superstars.

Blacks have been demigods for admiring youth. Malcolm X relates:

On June 27th of that year 1937 Joe Louis knocked out James J. Braddock to become the heavyweight champion of the world. And all the Negroes in Lansing, like Negroes everywhere went wildly happy with the greatest celebration of race pride our generation had ever known. Every Negro boy old enough to walk wanted to be the next Brown Bomber. My brother Philbert, who had already become a pretty good boxer in school, was no exception. (I was trying to play basketball, I was gangling and tall, but I wasn't very good at it, --too awkward.) In the fall of that year Philbert entered the amateur bouts that were held in Lansing's Prudent Auditorium. (Little, 21:23)

He was the "Negro American Dream." (Davis, 8:787) According to studies by Drake and Clayton of the ten persons receiving the most prominent display on the front page of the Chicago Defender between 1933 and 1938, Joe Louis led the rest. (St. Clair and Clayton, 34:787) Louis' style and manner created a milieu in which young Negro boxers could thrive, although after World War II baseball replaced boxing as the popular sport for black youngsters. In the 1950's over-exposure on television, gangland influences and publicized misery suffered by "expugs" dwindled boxing enthusiasm for ghetto blacks. (102:132) Joe Louis was "a credit to the human race" as well as his own, radically changing the regard many Caucasians had for Negroes. (76:116)

A significant gain, indeed, and who save God can ever run an accurate summary on all of the good Joe Louis did in the world; who can say how many bigoted minds were laundered in the wake of his cleanliness? He

was so completely loved, as he is until this day, that after Rocky Marciano knocked him out, he felt like apologizing; it pained him to beat his idol. (76:116)

Black children watched Sugar Ray Robinson as he drove his orchid-colored Cadillac down the streets of Harlem. (Davis, 8:789) They heard Cassius Clay ask on the eve of his championship "Who upset the world?" In answer, they screamed his name. Clay responded: ". . . and that means all of us are champions. I showed you now what we can do. We can do anything!" (Hern, 72:56) Elijah Muhammed viewed "Clay as the finest Negro athlete he has ever known." (Hern, 72:56) Malcolm X is quoted as follows:

The man who will mean more to his people than any athlete before him. He is more than Jackie Robinson was, because Robinson is the white man's hero, but Cassius is the black man's hero. Do you know why? Because the white man's press wanted him to lose. They wanted him to lose because he is a Muslim. You notice nobody cares about the religion of other athletes. But their prejudice against Clay blinded them to his ability. (Hern, 72:56)

Successful black athletes are proof to children with sport capabilities that there is a breach in the surrounding wall of deprivation.

The black athlete stands on the periphery of two cultures. His athletic achievements in instances have furthered his education and afforded him contact with the white culture. His social and physical mobility have resulted in a new pattern of class behavior which has been described as the emergence of "status" without "substance." (126:421) At times he finds himself on the margin of each culture, but a member of neither. R. E. Parks comments:

. . . a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples, never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his tradition and not

quite accepted because of racial prejudice in the new society in which he now seeks to find a place. He is a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies which never completely interpenetrate and fuse. (Park, 108:881-893)

Viewing the black athlete of the past, Harry Edwards comments that,

he was the institutionalized Tom, the institutionalized traitor, the white man's nigger. The Negro athlete was expected to stand fast and take it, keep his mouth shut and perform valiantly in front of cheering audiences. Regardless of whether he was professional or amateur, if he wanted respect off the field, if he wanted to collect the hero worship and social advantages that are the traditional rewards of the star athlete, he had to go to Blacktown. The Negro athletes were war demigods in the Negro community and jigaboos in the white. (Olsen, 28:17-19)

As a result of this dual socialization, that is, the influence of social circumstances bordering two cultures, many black competitors are unsatisfied, insecure, exploited individuals.

Much of the security the black athlete possesses is an illusion. For all the opportunities that the Negro receives in sports, discrimination is still present. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare attempted to assess how many colleges complied with the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by making all of the facilities and services available to all students. The department mailed questionnaires to colleges asking for statistics on the number of white and Negro students registered and the number of whites and Negroes receiving athletic grants-in-aid during the Fall school semester. The following statistics were supplied by several major conferences--the AAWU, Atlantic Coast, Big Eight, Big Ten, Southeastern and Southwest.

1. Of the 796,709 students registered in the 59 colleges, 12,699 or 1.5% are Negro.

2. The schools granted 10,698 athletic scholarships. Of these 634, or about 6% went to Negroes.
3. Michigan State gave the most Negro athletic scholarships--50. This is almost twice the number granted to Negroes by any other Big Ten school. Michigan State also gave the most athletic grants in the conference--265, and Purdue the fewest--164.
4. There are 1,861 Negroes in the Southeastern Conference. This is 1.4% of all students. SEC Colleges gave 2,236 athletic scholarships, the most of any major conference. Only 11 of these went to Negroes. Alabama, Auburn, Florida, Mississippi, Mississippi State, Louisiana State University and Georgia gave none to Negroes.
5. There are 1,001 Negroes in Atlantic Coast Colleges, which is 1.4% of the total number of students. The University of Virginia has the lowest percentages of Negro students--.4%. Thirty-four Negroes in the Atlantic Coast Conference received athletic grants--20 of them at Maryland and nine at Wake Forest. Duke, Clemson, and South Carolina, and Virginia gave no Negro athletic scholarships.
6. In the Southwest Conference, which is .65% Negro, 1,678 athletic scholarships were distributed, 16 to Negroes. The most given to Negroes by any school in the conference is 4 (Southern Methodist). Rice granted none.
7. The Ivy League filed no returns on athletic scholarships, since it offers none as such. Of its 41,005 students, 2% are Negroes.  
(80:10)

While these statistics indicate discrimination regarding black entrance and financial assistance in colleges, there is an "underground railroad" presently operating that transports Negroes from the ghettos into various colleges. The blacks' qualifications are athletic rather than academic. This is a form of black exploitation motivated by white men's opportunism. Due to poor educational preparation upon recruitment, and lack of adequate counseling while in school, Negro athletes seldom graduate with their college classes.



"Black students aren't given athletic scholarships for the purpose of education" says Harry Edwards, "Blacks are brought in to perform. Any education they get is incidental to their main job, which is playing sports. In most cases, their college lives are educational blanks." (Olsen, 104:16)

Many black collegiate athletes are dissatisfied, disgruntled, and disillusioned. They say they are dehumanized, exploited, and discarded on the white man's campus. (Olsen, 104:15) While away from the ghetto, life is strange and bitterly lonely. (Axthelm, 45:570)

The Negro collegiate continues to face discrimination in housing. He is often banned from joining fraternities. He runs the risk of losing his grant-in-aid if he dare date a white girl. His coach cannot find him a respectable summer job. Many promises turn into empty dreams. Often called "nigger,"

they are shunted into certain stereotyped positions and treated like subhumans by Paleolithic coaches who regard them as watermelon-eating idiots. (Olsen, 104:15)

The black sportsman is expected to excel athletically. If he does not he is suspected of "goldbricking, breaking training, and lacking concern for his teammates." (Edwards, 66:11) He is under extreme mental strain; and the damage to the black athlete's psyche is irreparable.

A black athlete on a white campus cannot afford to make mistakes or perform occasionally of a mediocre level. If he does, he does not play. He is expected to be tireless. If he slows up, it is because he is not in shape. He is always supposed to go at top speed and if he doesn't, he has let the entire Negro race down. He is expected to be better in general than his white teammates. In fact he has to be to play at all. (Edwards, 66:17)

On the field, or on the court the athlete may be a hero, but in street clothes and even in the team locker room his status is "just another nigger." Harry

Edwards feels that the black athlete can never prove himself in the eyes of white racists. He comments:

From their perspective he is and will always be a nigger . . . the only difference between the black man shining shoes in the ghetto and the champion black sprinter is that the shoe shine man's a nigger while the sprinter is a fast nigger. (66:20)

Further discriminatory practice, exploitation, and double standards are found in the professional ranks. Bill Russell, the first Negro American athlete hired to coach a United States professional team felt the inequality in treatment between him and his white Celtic teammates. While on road trips, proprietors asked him to please "be inconspicuous." (Adoff, 1:126) Russell heeds little the words of those that discuss equality in sports. He comments:

In order to reach the top of my field, I don't have to be as good, I have to be better. Because whether they'll admit it or not, I'm of the opinion that most teams in the National Basketball Association have a quota. There is wide speculation that there is a 50% squad quota . . . . (Linn, 92:60)

Representative of many black athletes today, Russell is impatient and skeptical. Weary of the dualism in sport and society he laughs at the folly and pretensions of white men and the world they have made. His only defense is that he is immune to racial hypocrisy. (Linn, 92:60-61)

The black athlete accepts the contrary role-playing in on-the-field relationships. Blacks and whites inhabit different social worlds. One finds the incidence of whites rooming with blacks infinitesimally small. While Negro ballplayers were reaping a bonanza in 1962, segregation and unequal treatment prevailed throughout the fourteen spring training camps in Florida. Minnie

Minoso for instance, was not welcomed at the motel occupied by the St. Louis Cardinals. Blacks on the New York Mets "understood" that they were not to "congregate" in the lobby of their team's motel. Whites were not similarly informed. Negroes on the Philadelphia Phillies slept with their teammates but never ate at the same accommodations. (98:82) Although athletic success has comfortably financed many Negroes, it has not ended bias, nor eliminated the barriers preventing social acceptance and intercaste socialization. Integration in sports too often ends at the exit from the ball park. In professional football one seldom sees a Negro quarterback. The old stereotype bias prevents the Negro from leadership positions. He fights two harsh myths: (1) The black athlete folds under pressure and (2) he is mentally inferior. The second myth is linked with a suspicion that whites will not respond to black leadership. In actuality there is considerable evidence to indicate that the Negro performs acutely under pressure and as displayed in college, can be successful in running a team. (Schaap, 114:75) When the athlete finishes his playing days his sport future is limited. The Negro has barely made any progress in the administrative, and managerial areas. White athletes of intelligence and initiative are almost certain to be offered jobs as coaches or executives upon retirement. Many qualified Negroes have tried in vain to obtain the same positions. (Henderson, 12:15) The black athlete is often excluded from increasing his income by endorsing commercial products and/or speaking at testimonials. As one black basketball player put it: "You would think that we would at least be able to endorse toothpaste. We are supposedly famous for those shining 32's." (Whitten,

134:27) The sport's world is not exempt from dehumanizing racialism. Although athletics has allowed the Negro many social privileges otherwise unattainable, discriminatory practices are still a painful reality in the sporting establishment.

## CHAPTER V

## THE BLACK REVOLUTION IN SPORT

Racism within America, a white sports establishment has led to revolt and boycotting across the nation. The athletic scene, traditionally the most stable of status quos has been "turned upside down" with protest, and threatened demonstrations by dissatisfied, frustrated, blacks. (Edwards, 65:16) Discontent exploded into rebellion during the 1967-1968 academic year with the black Olympic boycott and the revolt of black athletes and students on thirty seven major college campuses. Sport was the main lever used to pry overdue changes from white-oriented college administrators and athletic departments. (Edwards, 10:88) Underlying the demonstrations and demands by blacks is the attempt to regain black dignity, pride, and some degree of self-determination; qualities necessary for group cohesion and social acceptance in American society. (Edwards, 10:88) As discussed earlier, money, education, and behavior conforming to status attainment are prime requisites for social mobility. "I don't care about love," says Jimmy Brown. "I don't want the white man to love me. I want to live well--Money and Power. That's where its all at. That's the nitty-gritty." (Schaap, 114:76) The demands of the black revolt in athletics and other social aspects are preliminary acquisitions for the social ascent of any individual or group. Harry Edwards comments:



The black athlete is reacting . . . to the disparities between the heady artificial world of newspaper clippings, photographers, and screaming spectators and the real world of degradation, humiliation, and horror that confronts the overwhelming majority of Afro-Americans.

. . . with struggles being waged by black people in the areas of education, housing, employment, it was only a matter of time before Afro-American athletes too, shed their fantasies and delusions and asserted their manhood, faced the facts of their existence. The revolt was as inevitable as the rising of the sun. (Whitten, 134:26)

The new militant attitude of Negro college athletes has led to a change of basketball coaches at the University of California when the coach demanded that a black player cut his African-style hair. (Schaap, 114:72) At Michigan State, an assistant football coach's purported comment that the assassination of Martin Luther King had little relevance to "practice" inspired a threat by blacks to pass up all sports. Negroes at Michigan State are reacting against the following practices: that they are pressured to take nonacademic snap courses to stay eligible; that the school has a limited number of Negro coaches; that the black counselor should have a black assistant; that Michigan does not have a black trainer or doctor for Negro athletes; that the school discourages Negroes from playing baseball; and that the school has never had a black cheerleader. (41:8) Blacks feel these procedures are abusive and detrimental, and insist on radical changes in the athletic structure.

At the University of Texas at El Paso, black trackmen refused to compete against Brigham Young University because of the institution's racial policies and religious belief. (Schaap, 114:72) Brigham Young has become a target for irate black athletes throughout the West, and has made the Western Athletic Conference a showcase for the grievances of black athletes in 1969. Two years ago the uni-

versity could complacently host hundreds of blacks and whites at the National Collegiate Athletic Association's track championships with little difficulty. Today the school cannot hold a football game without picketing and off-field demonstrations. Intercollegiate sports was a beloved tradition at Brigham Young University but now is a happening people are hesitant to observe. Protest is directed toward the Mormon doctrine which insists that Negroes bear a special curse. Blacks are not allowed to the priesthood a right which is offered to any other male member of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints. Negroes are thought to be descendants from Cain and bear God's curse for the murder of Abel. The entire nine school Western Athletic Conference of which Brigham Young University is a member is now in the midst of turmoil over the school's policies.

(124:102) Football coach, Lloyd Eaton of the University of Wyoming dismissed fourteen black athletes from the team, after they took part in a demonstration against Mormon theology. (Putnam, 111:26-27) Protest rallies have spread throughout the league. One non-conference rival, Stanford, finally stopped competition with the Mormon university. Regarding the entire college scene and the athletic situation in particular Bill Waterman says: "It's building. All across the country. Building and building. This will be a new day for the college athlete both black and white." (Putnam, 111:27) The coaches of Brigham Young say they would love to recruit black athletes, but they have just about given up hope due to present racial protest.

Most of your top sprinters are colored boys, said track coach Clarence Robinson. But they visit here and ask where the other colored boys are. And they believe the girls here won't date them. That seems a logical assumption. . . . (124:102-103)

Black athletes and students at Iowa State University demanded that the classification of black people be changed from Negro to Afro-American. There were demands for dismissals of tenured faculty members and coaches at the University of Washington by blacks insisting racial bias was present. (Edwards, 10:88)

Following the Black Youth Conference in Los Angeles in 1966 revolt spread to professional athletics. Team members on the St. Louis Cardinals football club rebelled against the discriminatory behavior employed by coaches and white players. The Afro-Americans on the Cleveland Browns led by John Wooten took precautionary measures against the racial commands of the white Browns. (Edwards, 10:89-90)

Special attention is due Muhammad Ali, former Cassius Clay, previous heavyweight champion of the world. A champion nobody wanted; a man who defied white America and lost his title; a title no one could take from him in the ring; Ali stands firm with his Muslim beliefs. He insists on the separation of the blacks and whites as the only solution to the racial problem. He believes in black supremacy, black nationalism, and non-violence and that the black man is the "original man." Ali turns his back to white America.

In a very real sense he is the saint of this revolution in sports. He rebelled at a time when he as an athlete, stood alone. He lost almost everything of value to any athlete--his prestige, his income, and his title. But he maintained and enhanced the most crucial factor in the minds of black people everywhere--black dignity. (Edwards, 10:89-90)

Black activists organized an effective non-violent boycott against the racist New York Athletic Club during the 100th Annual Indoor Track Meet at Madison Square Garden. The issue at stake was to force the "crusty old Irish dominated club" to admit Negroes into its hallowed dining room and steambaths.

(Axthelm, 44:24-25) The protest may also have been a preliminary before the main event; a Negro boycott of the summer Olympics in Mexico City, 1968.

(73:85) As Harry Edwards expounded: "Complaints are being voiced; an awareness is apparent; changes are being demanded." (Edwards, 10:89)

The following achievements occurred as a result of the Black Power Conference involving outstanding black athletes and Negro leaders. (Edwards, 10:179-180) The Olympic Project for Human Rights, originated out of the Black Power Conference of 1966. This conference was organized to review racist organizations in the white establishment, the situation of Afro-Americans in athletics; to discuss the accomplishments of the athletic movement at this time in lieu of the NYAC boycott, the Olympic boycotts and racism in athletics. (Edwards, 10:178-179)

1. Several white racist organizations were completely shut down as athletic clubs or they have radically changed their "white only" policies.
2. International recognition of the plight of black people in the U.S.A. has been gained. A spokesman of the conference comments "we have shown that not even the most wealthy and most prestigious blacks are treated humanely in this racist society."
3. International avenues of communication and cooperation between Black African Nations and the Black Afro-Americans in America as witnessed by the cooperation and unity in getting South Africa and Southern Rhodesia banned "either in fact or effect from the international Olympic movement.
4. The myth as to how much sports has helped the Black people has been expressed.
5. White nationalism and racism instituted into the sports industry on the amateur, professional, and collegiate levels has been exposed.

6. Sports has been used as another mode of educating black people to the degree, extent, and intensity of racism in the United States.
7. The Olympic movement was exposed as a white, nationalistic, racist, political tool of exploit for oppressive governments.
8. Black people were shown that "use of their brains, as well as their ballots and bullets" could dramatize still further their degrading and humiliating status in this country.
9. We have brought the Black athlete out of the fantasy world of newspaper clippings and the athletic arena into the Black Revolution to take their long vacant place as leaders and spokesmen for Black people rather than as puppets and dupes for the white establishment. We have also exposed certain toms and traitors to Black people who have been used willingly by the white and Negro racist due to their athletic achievements. (Edwards, 10:179-180)

The Conference had also suggested a black boycott of the summer Olympics held in Mexico City in 1968. The history of the proposed boycott began in 1963 when Dick Gregory, black human-rights activist, politician, and comedian attempted to organize a boycott of the Russian-American Track and Field meet by black athletes. Although the boycott failed it gave impetus to the idea of utilizing amateur athletics as a means of dramatizing racial injustice. In 1964, Gregory again attempted to organize effective boycotting of the Olympic games held in Tokyo. Only a dozen people picketed the United States Olympic trials, as a result, but at every major track meet thereafter black athletes discussed the possibility of a black boycott of the '68 Olympics held in Mexico. (Edwards, 10:41) Harry Edwards (10:46) sums up the aim of the Olympic boycott saying, "It's simple. Black Dignity." Edwards was the top administrator of the Olympic Project for Human Rights with the assistance of Ken Noel and others at San Jose College in California. His office officially part of the Center for



Interdisciplinary Studies on the San Jose campus; in actuality is the headquarters for the revolt by black athletes of America.

In microcosm, Edward's Olympic boycott represents not only the nation's racial struggle, as seen by the new black leadership, but fits in with Edward's conception of the struggle by colored people all over the world against a white man's lingering colonialism. (Hano, 71:41)

To many people the Olympic Games is a political endeavor, with the facade of a sporting engagement.

For thirty-six of the seventy-two years that the Modern Olympics have been staged, American Negroes have contributed greatly to United States victories. And while they were winning medals, they were also being hauled before the world as symbols of American equality--an equality that has never existed. We are putting Washington and the world on notice that they can no longer count on the successors of Jesse Owens, Rafer Johnson, and Bob Hayes to join in a fun and games fete propaganized as the epitome of equal rights, so long as we are refused these rights in white society. (Edwards, 66:6)

Controversy regarding the pros and cons of a boycott was constant and heavy. Many athletes were perplexed with decision as whether to participate, or separate in the protest. Responsibility to do something was pressing, but where did the athlete's responsibility lie. Edwards felt that any Negro who did not participate in the protest was a "cop-out and a traitor to his race." (66:6) He believed that Black Olympic hopefuls could make their greatest contribution by not competing.

Symbolically, they would exchange bronze medals for decent jobs for black men, silver medals for quality education for black children, gold medals for adequate medical care in the ghetto. They would give up record book fame so that black people might have the power to help make the decisions which determine their destinies. (116:116)

Underlying the goals of the Olympic Project for Human rights and the purpose for black demonstration at this international event, the thoughts prevail of which

Edwards speaks:

The overriding goal (that of utilizing one of the few remaining ways of effective expression of the plight of Negroes in the United States) should be self evident. In a word, when people are suffering to the extent that they are laying down their lives in the streets, who is to say that any area is too sacred to be used as an avenue to relieve this suffering. Is an Olympic gold medal or the experience of participating in the Olympics of more sanctity than one human life--let alone 300 or 400 a year? Further, the factor which kept black athletes of Olympic caliber from being shot down in the streets of Newark or Detroit, or from being lynched like Emmett Till in Mississippi, was not their Olympic potential or their medals and trophies, but the simple fact that they were not there.

Evidence of the commonality of interest between black athletes and the masses of black people becomes apparent when one sees that even those Olympic Champions who have "proven themselves" in the games have been struck down when they have attempted to stand up as men or to express their own ideas and convictions. After their Olympic glory is no more than a lingering memory in their own minds and they are returned to the heap in which most black people live out their lives, they may begin to see their "accomplishment" in a broader perspective . . . invariably the black athletes--professional and amateur return to the status of "just another Negro," or worse yet a "has-been" who really never was and just didn't know it. (Edwards, 10:86)

Edwards addresses his boycott proposal not so much to the 1968 Olympics as to "the survival of society."

And what does society gain by some Negro winning a medal while other Negroes back home are burning down the country? It's time for the auction block to come down. Black masculinity is no longer for sale. (116:116)

The sacrifice was great. The decision difficult. Future opportunities were debatable. Contemplating the situation some blacks felt:

For the athlete, a decision to boycott the Olympics would mean giving up a lifelong dream, long hours of training, the pain, had been for nothing. It would mean too, that some Olympic prospects would justify themselves in this way, that the athlete put certain values higher than United States success, or his own participation in the Olympic Games. It would be his way of saying, "I care enough to do something." (54:11)

Those in opposition to the protest believed that the Negro should participate in

the Games. Nothing could be gained by boycott, while much could be gained by young Negroes achieving recognition for themselves and their race through superior performance. Athletic achievements always have been a source of great pride for the black race. Ralph Boston comments: "We have an unusual amount of talent among black athletes. If we didn't go to the Olympics, we wouldn't be hurting this country; we'd be hurting the Olympic games." (107-108) Twenty-one year old Ohio University sprinter, Emmett Taylor felt that a boycott would be detrimental to the Negro's cause because there was less discrimination in athletics. (116:116) Most seemed to have reached the same conclusion as twenty-six year old Art Walker, American record holder and former world indoor triple jumper.

I've thought about it alot, naturally, and quite frankly I just don't see that a boycott would do any good. The only thing it would do would show black America that the black amateur athletes do identify with the cause. I don't think it would solve anything. I think it would merely keep the guys from having the chance to compete in the Olympics. But I think we still ought to do something anyway to let black America know we identify.  
(107:188)

Ebony magazine polled Olympic hopefuls who directly or indirectly were involved in the possible racial fracas in Mexico. One per cent of the athletes questioned agreed with the boycott proposal resulting from the Black Youth Conference. Twenty-eight per cent were "undecided." Seventy-one per cent rejected the idea completely. Statistics indicate that while generally agreeing with the boycott's goals, the athletes overwhelmingly turned down the proposal of the Olympic Committee for Human Rights. (116:110) The only avenue left was to allow individual athletes upon their own discretion to display protest as they saw fit.

Support for the Olympic Project for Human Rights, and for recognition of racial strife in the United States came at the victory ceremonies for the 200 yard run. Tommie Smith, gold medal winner and John Carlos, the bronze medalist climbed the victory stand shoeless, each wearing a black glove. Smith had a black scarf tied around his neck. They were joined on the victory stand by Australian Peter Norman, who wore the official badge of the Olympic Project for Human Rights to underscore his support of the black liberation struggle. As the United States National Anthem played Smith and Carlos raised their gloved fists and bowed their heads. (Edwards, 10:103-104) Tommie Smith explained their gestures.

I wore a black right hand glove and Carlos wore the left hand glove of the same pair. My raised right hand stood for the power in black America. Together they formed an arch of unity and power. The black scarf around my neck stood for black poverty in racist America. The totality of our effort was the regaining of black dignity. The gesture of the bowed head was in remembrance of the fallen warriors in the black liberation struggle in America--Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. and others. (Edwards, 10:103-104)

Many were appalled at Smith's and Carlos' actions, while others felt they were heroes to black Americans. Smith said:

This was a victory for black people everywhere. The gold medal has always been the thing I wanted most in track. Crossing the finish was one of my happiest moments. But there are bigger things in my life than medals and records. It was far greater to win for my people. (Axthelm, 47:80)

Carlos said:

We knew we weren't alone. We knew that everyone at home who was watching was up on that stand with us. We wanted to let the world know about the problems of black people, and we did our thing, and stepped down. We believe we were right. We'll do it again tomorrow. (78:57)



The publicity resulting from the two athletes blatant demonstration almost overshadowed all the brilliant performances and personal dramas of the XIX Olympiad turning it into a showcase for black protest against racial injustice. (Axthelm, 47:74)

Black revolt within the white sport's establishment has caused social change. The Olympic Project for Human Rights has shown that athletics, whatever its Grecian Ideals, is not non-partisan or apolitical. (Edwards, 65:16)

Sport has been an effective expressive implement displaying the racial injustices present in society. Many of those demands requested by black athletes are "a must" before any Negro can socially advance not only within his community but between castes. Athletic protest has allowed for more educational opportunities. Salaries are ample and in accord with the abilities of players on the team, black or white, and white professionals. Career opportunities in the executive, and coaching areas are more available. The future economically and socially is more stable and promising for the black athlete now that he has demanded equality of treatment. Black ballplayers have insisted and earned the respect for themselves and their race due to their ethnic background. The pride and dignity in being an Afro-American has been displayed by the athlete today giving a sense of unity to his black brothers. Desire and respectability so needed by many in the Negro populace has been accomplished by the demanding black sportsman. He has given confidence to other Negroes to integrate; to compete against "Whitey," and to advance beyond the stagnation of the ghetto. Every demand and protest met has helped not only the athlete individually but all



his black brothers and sisters. Demonstrations have exposed the exploitation of the athlete that once thwarted him socially and economically. Revolution within sport has been a prime catalyst in the social advancement of blacks everywhere. Civil rights given many of the demanding black athletes within the sporting perspective have allowed for similar rights for black citizens in society. The civil rights allowed black athletes demanding dignity and equality are not individual, personal gains, but rather are achievements for all blacks in America.

The young Negro today is a "new Negro," aggressively concerned. "The insults he suffers are ancient, dating from the dawn of sports, but his reactions are fresh." (114:72) He is a sudden and strange mutation protesting verbosely, lashing out, staging boycotts, threatening strikes and hinting at stronger reprisals. Contemporary events and the increased quality and quantity of education has added a new dimension to his being. Possessing the character of a black nationalist now proud of his heritage and his color, he identifies the cause of other dark people everywhere with his own, and his own with theirs. (Hodding, 74:117-119) A common denominator among young Negroes is their uniform dissatisfaction. Frustrations spring from political, material, psychological and even spiritual disappointments. They resent all manifestations of second-class citizenship. Never before in history has the Southern educated Negro disliked the white man en masse. Today the Negro enjoys economic and political rights undreamed of by their fathers, as well as limited social acceptance by some white associates; still upon leaving the sport arena and other livelihoods blacks are relegated to an inferior social status. Black people are

rapidly increasing civil victories through present boycotts, the civil disobedience movement and successful non-violent tactics; with each victory their resentment of the remaining barrier grows stronger. Mounting antipathy is further complicated by the Negroes' inner resentment and outward defense of those black brothers who neither do credit to their race or recruit white allies.

The black athlete along with his other brothers and sisters is also angry, suddenly aware of years of exploitation and discrimination.

For the militant Negro college athlete, talent on the playing field has become a means toward an ideological end; nothing less than an attack on racial injustice in American life. (Axthelm, 56:56)

It is difficult for the Negro sportsmen today to remain simply an athlete "reveling in his sport achievement and going home at night with a feeling that he has advanced his race." (Olsen, 28:25)

The Negro star who refuses to take a firm stand on racial matters finds himself at worst ostracized by his race, consigned to Bernie Casey's "spiritual death" or at best left in a kind of limbo between white and black. (Olsen, 28:25)

Regarding the Olympic boycott, Gene Johnson, Field Representative and member of the 1963 United States Pan American Games Track Team wrote a letter to Harry Edwards.

. . . I am extremely proud to see that those proposing the boycott have enough social awareness to realize that this struggle of the man in Fillmore, Watts, and in Harlem is their struggle also. The efforts of Negroes in athletics have benefited only the athlete involved. The Civil Rights movement or struggle requires the aid and contributions of all black men regardless of their "station in life." Negro athletes should not be exempt from nor should they divorce themselves from this struggle. The mere fact that a great sacrifice such as foregoing an opportunity to participate in the Olympics, is involved points to the urgency surrounding the issue . . . (Edwards, 10:130)

Today the black athlete's commitment extends far beyond the lime washed goal line or an outfield fence 356' away. His determination like his brothers' allows him to speak out, no longer afraid to lose his position. Edwards comments truthfully:

Athletes are on the field maybe four hours a day. The rest of the time, they're on the same garbage heap that most of the black people in this society live in. But they have access at a moment's notice to the mass media. Black athletes must take a stand. (Axthelm, 46:56)

Athletes are beating the drums for their cause using sport as a liason between black and white castes. Protest activity in the athletic world has made the Negro problem in America internationally visible. Dissenting echoes from archaic stadium walls are supporting and implementing liberation for blacks everywhere.

## CHAPTER VI

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate sport as a mechanism of mobility for the black athlete in contemporary society. The conceptual complexity of social mobility and its relation to the stratification system in America has been reviewed and the status of the Negro has been considered.

More than a century after the Civil War, and sixteen years after the Supreme Court's school-desegregation ruling, the American Negro has still not achieved freedom and equality. His contemporary status has been determined in part by the penalties of our country's past inadequacies and by the "piecemeal character of our present re-arrangements." (123:51) The Negro paradoxically strides between the "democratic whole and the racial segment." (Reid, 112:256) He maintains at times a hyphenated status between the black and white community. Warner and DuBois describe the hierarchical system of moral and material valuations related to social mobility. Both theorists agree that social class and caste are two prominent features in America today. The barrier between the black and white castes is the institutionalized system of racism, segregation. Vertical mobility is possible in the class structure within castes but limited in terms of horizontal movement beyond caste periphery. In the social configuration of caste and class, advancement is dependent upon one's education, occupation, income, and value orientations manifest in one's style

of behavior.

After reviewing all perspectives of sport, it was found that sport does offer those criteria which Warner, DuBois and other sociologists state are essential for social advancement in America. Sport affords the Negro one of the greatest opportunities for social, cultural, and economic recognition in contemporary society. Through sport, the black athlete has greater professional opportunity. Educational advancements are afforded thousands of blacks through athletic scholarship. Remuneration is awarded without discrimination. Brown, Chamberlain, Alcindor, Patterson, Clay, and Frazier are but a few who have shattered once discriminatory cash barriers in athletics. The sports superstars possess a magnetic charisma in American culture. Sport has allowed the black athlete to remove himself from the periphery of two communities to a position of cultural communicator between castes. A famed, prestigious sportsman, the black athlete has furthered both international good will and racial justice. He has helped to bring tolerant and civilized attitudes toward the problem of racial discrimination, breaking through the existing cultural gap in America.

Sport is a working ideology that proves the human practicality of integration. (76:115) Equality of opportunity and freedom which are limited in society for some are afforded all in athletics. The sporting milieu has the capacity and avows the ethical principles whose implementation affords better human relations among black and white. (Edwards, 10:118) Sport has become what ex-Olympic sprint champion Jesse Owens calls, "the great equalizer." (102:130) Athletics has been in the past and continues in the present to be a



significant contributor to the cultural assimilation of minority groups. It is one area where black youngsters can confront whites and prove their superiority. Athletics have proven in the past that they provide potential escape from poverty for the black child. The number of those who have made it "to the top of the sports world" may be small in comparison to those who have endeavored, still sports remain one of the few social avenues where a black individual can attempt the climb upward, without facing almost insurmountable social, political, and legal obstacles.

The literature also indicates that there are certain negative factors evident in sport. Some writers feel that exploitation of the black athlete has limited his educational career and stunted his possibilities for social advancement. Others feel that discrimination has restricted professional opportunities. Edwards states that racist coaches curtail many promises for housing and jobs for black athletes once they are recruited to campus. It is felt that these incidents are few compared to the many opportunities afforded most black sportsmen and their detriment minor compared to the significant benefits derived from athletic involvement. The positive aspects of sport far outweigh the negative considerations cited. More instances of vertical mobility have occurred for black athletes because of the social advantages inherent in sport than the loss of social status. Although writers still question whether sport is a vehicle of mobility in America, it is concluded from data reviewed that it does enhance advancement within one's caste and for some increases the possibility of horizontal movement beyond caste barriers.

In conclusion it has been found that sport has increased the social acceptance of blacks in society, has reduced racial antagonism, and has proved that harmony is possible between black and white factions. Integration is more prominent in sport than segregation. Justice is more prevalent than neglect. Achievement is more evident than exploitation. Prejudice is lessened and the available opportunity for social, economic, and educational improvement is enhanced. Some of the social and economic problems that the Negro faces today can be ameliorated through sport offerings. The literature and data cited within conclude that sport does socially elevate the black athlete through his caste strata and has allowed some blacks horizontal movement beyond the restrictions of segregation; in these ways it is a positive mechanism of social mobility for the black athlete in contemporary society.

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