

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Effects of the 1988 Modernization of Wrigley Field to the Lake View Neighborhood

Competencies:

L-8: Can pose questions and use methods of formal inquiry to answer questions and solve problems.

L-9: Can use research techniques to analyze the relationship between professional sports franchises and their effects on communities.

Monica Siggelkov
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I. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

A. THE TOPIC

Using neighborhoods as the theme for my research proposal, I began by looking at the effects professional sports franchises have on their communities. As John Zipp puts it, “Sport occupies a central place in North America culture, and local sports teams are often treated with awe and reverence by their hometown fans” (158). Sports stadiums have both economic and social consequences on their host cities and there are some differences in opinion as to what these results are. Public subsidies in support of these professional sports franchises are generally rationalized under the assumption that teams and stadiums create jobs and influence economic expansion (Baade 15).

I then decided to look more specifically at Wrigley Field and the 1988 modernization which brought field lighting and night games to Lake View. Shortly after William Wrigley inherited the Cubs franchise from his deceased parents he was forced to sell the ball club to the Tribune Company in 1981, when Wrigley Field remained the only professional league stadium where nighttime baseball could not be played (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 679). The Tribune Company, which also owned WGN-TV and WGN-Radio, naturally wanted to add field lights to Wrigley Field to increase the number of games that could be broadcasted during prime-time TV (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 680). This created much dispute and organizations were formed to specifically block the illumination of Wrigley Field (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 681). After much debate and argument the Wrigley Field agreement, which was considered to be a compromise between the Tribune Company and

opposing groups was approved in 1988, to the dissatisfaction of many residents and merchants in the area (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 686).

B. THE PROBLEM

There seems to be a lot of discussion involving the effects of sports franchises and who should fund the stadiums. I wonder how this impacts their communities economically. Because Wrigley Field appears to bring liveliness to the area, I have often wondered the effects this stadium has had on the neighborhood. I can recall numerous discussions about how Wrigley Field is outdated compared to other professional baseball venues and related proposed expansion or remodeling ideas. What benefits would making changes to Wrigley Field bring? Who would pay for these upgrades? What would happen to the Lake View neighborhood if the Cubs franchise decided to relocate completely one day? These were just some of the questions I was asking myself when I began my research on the effects professional sports franchises have on their neighborhoods.

In an article by Robert Baade the following question is asked; “Do Professional sports increase income and create jobs in amounts that justify the behavior of cities?” (1). This is a relevant question to ask when a sports franchise is requesting the use of public funding to support their team. It is also becoming more common practice for professional sports teams to threaten relocation to an entirely new city if their demands are not met. This new aggressiveness has led to heated competition among these cities due to the limited supply of these franchises (Zipp 158). The economic possibilities of new stadiums can be so appealing that smaller cities with new stadiums can begin to compete with larger cities with older stadiums (Zimbalist 17). This bidding among cities has created sports problems to become a matter of public concern

(Pelissero, Henschen, and Sidlow 117). Research on this problem is necessary in order to properly answer this question and for communities to be able to make informative decisions based on the related research.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding the field lighting remodel of Wrigley Field so from here I narrowed my problem down to the effects adding field lighting and subsequently night games to Wrigley Field had on the Lake View neighborhood businesses. There was a great deal of controversy in 1988 surrounding this debate. This problem was not based on a public versus private funding issue but rather a decision-making process which balanced corporate versus neighborhood interests (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 678).

It is summed up best by Logan and Molotch:

To modify the layout and appearance of a liminal structure such as Wrigley Field, which doubles as a corporate-controlled property and as a neighborhood landmark, also can generate dissonant responses from those viewing the physical modification as an ingredient in a commercial revenue-generation plan (corporate executives, municipal planning officials), as opposed to those concerned with the facility’s “use value” within the context of the adjoining neighborhood environment (local residents). (quoted in Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 677)

C. THE QUESTION

The question I propose examining is: How did Wrigley Field hosting night games effect the closing of businesses in the Lake View neighborhood?

There were a couple of quotes which inspired me when creating my question. One of particular relevance was in a statement during an interview with Charlotte Newfeld of CUBS, an organization opposed to the field lighting initiative. She stated:

Remember that the small-industrial base in the community was disappearing. A local precision-tool plant was closing. What was growing were jazz clubs, theaters, retail, and other small businesses, ... and the gay and lesbian community along Halstead...because of cheap rents. (quoted in Spirou and Bennett, *It's Hardly* 134-135)

D. THE HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis I propose testing is: Wrigley Field hosting night games caused businesses to close in the Lake View neighborhood.

E. DELIMITATIONS

- I will not be researching if the businesses that have closed in the Lake View neighborhood re-opened or relocated to a new neighborhood. I am only looking at businesses no longer in Lake View so relocation is irrelevant to the study if outside of the neighborhood boundaries. If a businesses has departed entirely from Lake View it will be considered closed.

F. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Closed Business: No longer carrying commercial transactions under the same registered company name

- Lake View Neighborhood: As defined by the City of Chicago's Lake View Community Map, http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/doi/general/GIS/Chicago_Maps/Community_Areas/CA_LAKE_VIEW.pdf

G. ASSUMPTIONS

- Wrigley Field will remain in Lake View.
- Businesses will continue to operate in Lake View.

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

A. MAJOR ISSUES EXPLORED BY SCHOLARS

Although I did not initially find any relevant scholarly articles where research had been conducted specifically on Wrigley Field or the Chicago Cubs franchise, I did find several studies that had been conducted on other professional sports teams. To my surprise, the information I found was not what I had anticipated. When I think of the residents and businesses in the Lake View area, I always assumed that the neighborhood flourished as a direct result of the location of the home of the Chicago Cubs at Wrigley Field Stadium and without it, the area would quickly plummet. The overwhelming theme I found instead was that there is little, if any, economic or social benefits for cities to host and financially support professional sports franchises.

According to Robert Baade, taxpayers who are often a source for funding professional sports stadiums and teams are commonly misled by the false assumption that these tax increases with eventually lead to stimulating the economy through local job creation and incomes (2). Another article I found had very similar findings, stating how the promotional literature often suggests that cities who attract or retain a sports franchise will benefit from more local jobs, higher local income, and increased local tax revenues (Coates and Humphreys 298). Economics however are unlikely to agree with subsidies that do not promote a public good or serve redistributive goals (Coates and Humphreys 299). Although stadiums attract business in the surrounding area, most of the funds generated are spent outside of the neighborhood (Baade 3).

A study on the economic impact of the 1994 baseball strike on host cities was conducted as a result of the increasing aggressiveness by franchises encouraging cities to compete for their

location through new and upgraded facilities, drawing on the belief that professional sports teams have both a direct and indirect impact on their home cities (Zipp 157). This study challenged that idea by providing evidence that during the seven weeks of cancelled ball games caused by the strike, the economy of these host U.S. cities were not affected (Zipp 177). In addition, a study on the effects professional sports franchises have on the emotional support within those communities found it to be an ineffective way to build a lasting sense of community (Smith and Ingham 252). Even though studies have shown an increase in local social problems due to tourist destinations often caused by publicly financed sports stadiums, powerful decision-makers continue to support the idea (Delaney and Eckstein 331).

It appears to be believed by most that the reasoning behind all of this misconception is to receive more public funding. The question is then, why do the city officials and decision-makers seem to support this idea when the studies overwhelmingly disagree? The answer, according to one article, is that although these groups favor stadiums because members are sports fans, more importantly, many CEOs see new stadiums as important recruiting tools for top executives (Delaney and Eckstein 347). The study in this article found that cities with strong coalitions that clearly connected new stadiums with economic growth were more successful in building new stadiums with relatively large amounts of public funding (Delaney and Eckstein 350).

Once I began to narrow down my search and look for any articles that discussed the effects of sports franchises in Chicago, and even more specifically, Wrigley Field, I had trouble finding literature where I felt quality, original research had already been conducted. I did however find several articles of interest that discussed and analyzed stadiums in Chicago on which I was hoping to focus. Wrigley Field, located in an urban area as opposed to more rural

setting like many stadiums, is a “shining example of how a sports facility can integrate itself within a local neighborhood and provide positive economic spillovers to the nearby community” (Baade, Nikolova, and Matheson 5). Because Wrigley Field is one of the two oldest stadiums that remain in the Major Baseball League, it’s features are unique and compatible to it’s neighborhood and unlike most other facilities in it’s characteristics and size (Baade, Nikolova, and Matheson 6). Wrigley Field is also known for its buildings which offer rooftop seating that surround the stadium, as well as the busy bars, shops, and restaurants encompassing the neighborhood (Baade, Nikolova, and Matheson 6).

In 2004, the Chicago City Council unanimously recommended landmark status for certain features of Wrigley Field, allowing necessary changes to be made to the stadium while protecting certain historical design and neighborhood concerns expansion could cause (Unger 534). This is some of the reasons why I felt Wrigley Field to be a good choice for a stadium to study. From my findings, either new stadiums that have been recently built or cities where there are current plans for rebuilding their facilities are what have been commonly chosen for research and I believe more thorough investigations at some of the different franchises are needed.

Another factor to consider in sports franchise research is community and fan support. A study on the brand loyalty of the Chicago Cubs was conducted which found strong fan support and loyalty, even with the losing history they are known for (Bristow and Sebastian 271). In fact, when making a comparison between the Chicago Cubs and the Minnesota Twins who had similar records during 1999 and 2000, it was found that Wrigley Field was frequently filled to capacity while the Metrodome was commonly almost empty (Bristow and Sebastian 271).

A book and article that I found by Costas Spirou and Larry Bennett on the modernization of Wrigley Field in 1988 to add field lighting and the controversy surrounding it particularly sparked my curiosity for the research I have decided to propose. As in many of the other cases discussed, the Cubs franchise threatened to leave the Lake View if the approval to add night games to Wrigley Field was not met which caused concern for many (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 682). The debate between the Tribune Company and those opposing the decision to bring night games to Lake View led to individual research and discussion on the matter, trying to gain the support of others and most importantly, the City Council members.

One survey conducted by City of Chicago officials found that those living nearest Wrigley Field were most opposed to the installation of the lights, but of those twice the proportion of more distant residents would accept the installation of lights rather than have the Cubs leave Lake View (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 682). The Tribune Company conducted their own marketing research which determined that there would be relatively limited fan resistance to adding field lights to Wrigley Field, and in turn, increasing the number of the club’s games that could be broadcasted during prime-time television (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 680). They also commissioned an economic impact analysis in 1986 which estimated the Cubs contributed more than \$90 million annually to the city’s economy (quoted in Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 683).

The year following the expansion, an article titled, “Joy in Cubville?” was written during playoff season which empathized some of the problems some business owners were seeing following the lighting installation and introduction of night games to the neighborhood. Although it was noted that bar owners within a quarter-mile radius of the stadium were seeing opportunities and dollar signs, some others were “looking to the future with fear and

loathing” (McCracken 1). Bob Roschke of Bookworks, who had been selling used books and records in the neighborhood for the past five years prior remarked:

But with the night games, it’s horrible. I think everyone around here will agree it’s killed business for them, except for the bars, maybe. People won’t cone into the neighborhood at noon, even, if they know there’s a night game, because they feel like they won’t find a parking space. It’s a 20 to 30 percent drop in business for us. (McCracken 1)

Since the introduction to nighttime baseball in Wrigley Field, traffic and parking problems have notably increased, which has created major problems for some business owners (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 694). For local participants in the lighting conflict, Lake View has been found to be a less friendly neighborhood in the 1990s, and the range of cultural and entertainment venues in the area surrounding Wrigley Field has narrowed (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 696-697). As Spirou and Bennett sum it up:

The upgrading of Wrigley Field, in tandem with the coming of evening baseball to Lake View, illustrate in the most dramatic manner the subtle effects of a neighborhood’s geographic structure, economic makeup, and cultural identity that can be produced by a physical development project. (699)

The lighting expansion and night game implementation to Wrigley Field is a unique opportunity to conduct research on how professional sports franchises effect their neighborhoods that hasn’t been done before. Even though the research I found generally agrees that stadiums do not have a positive economic effect on their communities, I think it is more commonly believed by those who have visited Wrigley Field and witnessed the surrounding area that the stadium has, in fact, had a positive impact on the businesses there. I feel that although that may be true for

certain businesses catering to a sports theme, it may not been so favorable for others. Looking at which businesses have left Lake View over the last twenty-four years will be a good start in examining the true effects nighttime games in the neighborhood as played on other businesses. Of the research studies I found, there has been very little conducted at Wrigley Field and none that looked at the effects bringing night games had on businesses in Lake View.

B. METHODOLOGIES UTILIZED BY SCHOLARS

Of the literature I reviewed that more generally discussed the economic and social effects related to professional sports franchises which also provided detailed research, I found that even though their findings supported the same basic hypothesis there were a variety of different methods and approaches used in conducting this research. Using statistics and surveys seemed to be a little more popular (Baade, Coats and Humphreys, Zipp). However, economic models (Baade), focus groups (Smith and Ingham), interviews (Delaney and Eckstein), and field observations (Delaney and Eckstein) were also conducted. It was split that some used only one method to come to their conclusions (Coates and Humphreys, Smith and Ingham) while others relied on two or more methods (Baade, Delaney and Eckstein, Zipp).

All of these scholars, except Smith and Ingham, appeared to be positivist researchers. There were a mixture of approaches that were used with these methods. I found very few similarities in comparing the methodologies used. While the two researchers that used surveys did quantitative research (Coates and Humphreys, Zipp), Coates and Humphreys collected qualitative type of data instead. Collecting quantitative research did seem to be the more popular method overall but, again, a split between cross-sectional (Baade, Coates and Humphreys, Smith and Ingham) versus longitudinal (Delaney and Eckstein, Zipp) time frames were used. The

research conducted by Smith and Ingram was quite different from the others, using focus groups to collect qualitative research over a cross-sectional time frame. However, they admitted while discussing the data collection process, that it was very difficult to get participants to partake in the study (263). This may have been the reason behind other scholars not choosing their methodology.

There appears to be a lot of inconsistency in the research conducted throughout the different venues. It makes me wonder if this is because there is some uncertainty as to what is the best method. The problem I see with most of the research that I found is that the question they are trying to answer is too broad and difficult to define. There are too many variables to consider when looking into how stadiums economically effect their communities. Defining what constitutes as “economically effecting” a neighborhood or city is difficult and unclear in most cases. When data was collected in multiple cities I feel there are too many independent variables and circumstances surrounding each venue to properly do a comparison.

Other scholars also question the methods used by researchers to test their hypotheses. Dennis Coates points out that one thing to consider is the difference between stadiums that are located downtown verses those in the suburbs (567). The impact of local development will be various since there is a significant difference in the conditions of these two types of stadiums (Coates 567). In the article, “When Professional Sports Justify the Subsidy, a Reply to Robert A. Baade,” Thomas Chema makes a direct attack against one of the scholars whose research I reviewed and who has written several other articles on the subject. In this article, he criticizes several of Baade’s methods including his assumptions, delimitations, and the “rather narrow definition of economic development posited in the study” (Chema 21).

The authors who co-wrote the book and article that inspired my research proposal used multiple methods in collecting their data and conducting their analysis which included collecting planning documents, conducting interviews with participants in debates and negotiations surrounding each project, and examining a variety of “secondary, principally journalistic materials” (Bennett and Spirou 42). They also mentioned in the case of the Wrigley Field lighting debate how the Tribune Family conducted their own marketing research to use to their advantage (Spirou and Bennett, “Revamped Stadium” 680). The potential bias in this research can make for a solid argument against the results of this survey. According to Spirou and Bennett, “Neither the accuracy of these numbers, nor the substantive question of the Cub’s real contribution to the Chicago economy, was ever debated” (684). Andrew Zimbalist points out how dozens of these types of studies have been performed by consulting firms under contract with the affected city or team and predictably find it to be a “substantial, positive impact from adding a sports team” (19). He further goes on to point out the difficulties with the methodologies with these studies and mentions the problems with the exaggerated and favorable assumptions as well as the delimitations conveniently being omitted (Zimbalist 20).

This proves that whether a study has shown a positive economic benefit from a professional sports franchises or not, the researcher must always be clear and concise because there will someone out there ready to disprove the findings if they don’t like the results. Again, I think the problem with these methodologies is that in order to solve such a broad question it would have to be broken down into smaller, more manageable questions where several separate studies would need to be conducted, such as the one I am proposing.

Of the studies that were conducted I found those where original research was conducted and the methodologies used to conduct the research were clearly stated and explained in detail to

be most credible. I was not successful in finding much where this type of research had been conducted for Wrigley Field and was relevant to my topic. I was unable to find any original research previously conducted that specifically answered the question I am proposing.

Therefore, I am proposing to conduct original research that has not been done up to this point on a narrowed topic, unlike most of the studies I have reviewed. I will also be using a combination of historical research and fieldwork which I have not seen done in any related studies but will be ideal in answering my question.

III. PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. DATA OR EVIDENCE TO BE COLLECTED

In an attempt to answer my question and test my hypothesis the explanatory research study I am proposing consists of collecting data on the businesses that were located in Lake View prior to the Chicago Cubs hosting night games at Wrigley Field and conduct a comparison to those businesses still located in Lake View in order to see what businesses are no longer in the neighborhood.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA

In order to test my hypothesis I will be working with the independent variable: Wrigley Field hosting night games, and dependent variable: businesses closed in Lake View. The data I will collect will be open verses closed businesses, which I have already defined. I will conduct a cross-sectional study collecting quantitative historical data of businesses that were located in Lake View at the time night games were introduced at Wrigley Field. Likewise, I will collect data for businesses currently located in Lake View in order to get a longitudinal view of the changes that have happened over the years.

2. WHERE THE DATA ARE LOCATED

The data in this study will be collected from the Lake View neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois. The primary source I will use for my study will be documents from the Chamber of Commerce. I will use archival documents to find a listing of active registered businesses in August of 1988 as well as those presently in-business.

B. TECHNIQUES FOR COLLECTION OF DATA

Using a positivist approach in collecting historical data I will carry out quantitative research. I will gather documents from the Chamber of Commerce to obtain a list of businesses which were open in August of 1998 and another list of businesses open at present time. From there, I will extract only those businesses which fall within the Lake View boundaries which I have already been defined.

After conducting step one of the analysis of this data, which will be defined in the following methods of analysis section, I will conduct field research to confirm the list of closed businesses I have collected. I will do this by visiting each of the locations in Lake View where I found there to be a business in the historical archives but was not listed in the present documents. If, through my observations, I find a business to still be transactional under the same name it will be removed from the list of closed businesses. I feel this confirmation is important since the list of closed businesses is what I will be analyzing at the end of the study so it's accuracy is imperative.

C. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

After the data is collected I will conduct statistical analysis of the data in order to create charts and a map to properly present my research.

1. HOW THE DATA WILL BE EXAMINED FOR ITS MEANING

Once I have the two lists consisting of businesses in Lake View open in 1988 and those open presently there will be two steps in analyzing the data. First, I will conduct a cross reference of the two and create a new list consisting of only those businesses which were found

on the 1988 list but not on the present list. These are the businesses I will consider to be closed for the purposes of this study.

After I conduct my field research and have my final data list of the businesses that closed since the opening of night games at Wrigley Field, I will conduct a deeper statistical analysis of those businesses. To do this I will categorize these businesses into groups by the type of product or service that was provided, (e.g., restaurant, retail shop, grocery store, theater, dry cleaner). I hope to be able to use the information found for the business in the Chamber of Commerce to be able to accurately categorize these businesses but for those where that information is not available I will have to investigate further if needed. If I am unable to obtain this information they will be put into a miscellaneous category. From here I will be able to conclude quantitative analyses with the totals of how many of each of the different types of businesses have closed in Lake View since the installation of field lighting at Wrigley Field.

2. HOW THE DATA WILL BE PRESENTED

Once I complete the analysis of the data, my final step will be to present the data in a manner that is clear and visually appealing. Although the end results will help to determine the appropriate chart or graph I will need to use, I anticipate using multiple methods of data presentation. A pie chart indicating the percentage of the closed business list by type would be an ideal illustration of the effects at a quick glance. However, I would also like to include a detailed map of the Lake View area where the data was collected which includes a complete listing of the all of the closed businesses and each of the businesses indicated on the map by number at their location in 1988 and color-coded by business type. I feel this will give a complete presentation of each business and category to it's relation of distance to Wrigley Field

that was present at the time of the introduction of nighttime baseball in Lake View but is no longer there today.

IV. OUTLINE OF THE FINAL REPORT

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V. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The outcomes of this research will assist in understanding the impact adding night games at Wrigley Field has had on businesses in the Lake View area. Rather than looking at the businesses that have developed or are currently present in the area, this study concentrates on those businesses that have closed since the change. It is likely in many cases that these businesses which were forced to close was caused by the field lighting modernization of Wrigley Field. Therefore, I feel it is important to study the quantities and types of businesses which have closed to get a better comprehension of the effects sports franchises can have on a neighborhood.

Although hosting night games at Wrigley Field may have assisted growth in businesses which appeal to sports fans (e.g., bars, restaurants, retail shops), this study is beneficial for residents who reside in and near Lake View by assessing if any negative impacts may have been caused. By reviewing which businesses have left the neighborhood we can better grasp the specific types of venues that are no longer available in Lake View. This knowledge may be valuable when future changes to Wrigley Field are being considered. In addition, other communities and cities can use this information when faced with similar situations where they need to analyze the potential effects sports stadiums can have on their communities.

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