
“A Diamond Is a Boy’s Best Friend”: The Rise of Little League Baseball, 1939-1964

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ON A LATE AUGUST AFTERNOON, a diminutive eight-year-old named Frank Rybczyk became somewhat of a national sports celebrity at the 1948 Keds National Little League Tournament in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. After spending much of the tournament as a warm-up catcher and first-base coach for his Middletown, Connecticut, team, Rybczyk—whose troublesome ethnic name was simply shortened to “Murphy” by his teammates—finally got his chance at the plate. Wearing rubber cleats and clutching a youth-sized bat, both specifically designed for younger ball players, Murphy waited as the “towering” twelve-year-old pitcher hurled the “Official Little League” baseball toward the plate. The powerful hurler, not used to pitching to such a tiny batter, had difficulty scaling his pitches down to Murphy’s level. The result was a base on balls. Once on base, spectators were not sure how the youngster would be able to run, as his uniform—conspicuously emblazoned with the corporate sponsor “Keds”—appeared to be three sizes too big. In fact, the sportswriters covering the tournament had taken to calling Murphy “the uniform that walks like a boy.” However, Murphy proved these doubters wrong by bearing down and making it to second base, “one proud eight-year-old.”¹

But for many of those watching Murphy and his teammates play, what dazzled them more than such on-base heroics was the boys’ behavior when they were in the dugout or completely off of the field. Spectators were impressed with how grown-up these young players appeared, how they carried themselves in a highly experienced manner. Parents

and journalists alike were struck by the ways in which Murphy and his teammates seemed to “cultivate all the professional mannerisms” of major league ball players, including knocking the dirt off of their rubber-cleated shoes and rubbing dust on their hands “à la Ted Williams or Joe DiMaggio.” Off the field, observers were impressed when Murphy, after learning that his mother had given birth to a new baby back home in Middletown, “gravely passed out cigars in the lobby of the hotel.” Such actions showed, according to at least one journalist, that players like Murphy were learning familial responsibility on their way to becoming fine men, all the while avoiding the pitfalls of juvenile delinquency.²

While the world soon forgot about young Murphy, Little League baseball, a program founded in Williamsport in the summer of 1939 by Carl Stotz and designed for boys ages eight through twelve years of age, would prove exceedingly difficult to ignore for postwar Americans. While growth was slow for the program’s first five years of existence (there were just four four-team Little Leagues by 1944, all located in the Williamsport area), something happened during the years following World War II, particularly in the rapidly expanding suburbs of the Northeast, West, and Southwest. After the end of the conflict, leagues began “multiplying like amoebae.” In one ten-year period (1949-1958), an additional 4,662 leagues of 21,911 teams were franchised. By the early 1960s, Little League had spread to all fifty states and the Territory of Guam, and such foreign countries as Cuba, Mexico, England, France, Germany, Turkey, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. Charting the number of young boys participating in Little League throughout the postwar era can perhaps best capture this phenomenal growth. In 1939, only forty-five boys played Little League. This number had grown to 11,800 boys by 1949, it skyrocketed to 334,300 by 1958, and just six years later this total reached 1,066,600. “No phase of sport in the history of this country [U.S.],” observed one contemporary commentator, “has ever caught on with the contagious enthusiasm of the Little League.”³

Why did Little League baseball grow so rapidly during the postwar era? On one level, one can see the rise of Little League as simply the result of increased postwar affluence. “Never have so many people,” announced *Business Week* in 1953, “had so much time on their hands—with pay—as today in the United States.” To many parents, Little League was undoubtedly a manifestation of this phenomenon, a celebration of the victory of leisure. Yet beneath this veneer of celebration, there seemed to lurk a series of questions and concerns. As a number of scholars have shown, the period of Little League’s greatest growth can best be described as an “age of anxiety.” Changes in familial structure and dynamics, the rise of the corporate economy, and the continued expansion of a mass consumer culture led many Americans to question how they fit into the postwar order. Nowhere was this sense of anxiety more noticeable than when the nation discussed the place of children in this changing world. In this period of uncertainty and apprehension, children came to represent a hope for stability in the future, yet these same young people seemed particularly susceptible to the “troubles, anxieties, and sacrifice” that plagued adults. As intense fears of rising rates of juvenile delinquency gripped America, postwar citizens searched for ways to acclimate children to this new cultural climate.⁴

As the example of Murphy begins to illustrate, Little League had the potential to speak to these concerns by addressing such issues as proper gender roles, ethnicity, professionalism, and consumption. In postwar United States, Little League baseball allowed

Americans to address some of the complex tensions caused by the changes wrought by the end of the war and its aftermath and to help young lads find their place in this rapidly changing environment. Little League baseball, as both a participatory and spectator sport, was one cultural vehicle through which familial roles were redefined and strengthened and by which numerous groups of Americans helped children accommodate themselves to such shifting structural realities as the rise of the corporate work world, the continued growth of a consumption-based society, and the beginning of the Cold War. Little League baseball, in short, served as an arena in which to address the concerns associated with these changes as well as an important instrument of legitimation of values initiated by the new social, cultural, economic, and political realities of postwar America. This was true among the adults of the United States as well. For such grown-ups, Little League not only served as a force of legitimation but also came to symbolize how the postwar economy of corporate liberalism—a democracy based on traditional gender roles, corporate hegemony, and increased consumption—was supposed to work, and how this type of democracy could be spread around the world in the Cold War struggle against Communism. By appealing to the historically-sanctioned practice of youth baseball (“Baseball for boys of America,” commented Little League president Peter McGovern, “is a tradition as deep-rooted as any we have”) Little League was able to help a number of segments of the population of the United States come to terms with this new postwar order.⁵

According to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, “[I]t is possible to consider the whole range of sporting activities and entertainments offered to social agents . . . as a *supply* intended to meet a *social demand*.”⁶ In the postwar environment of the United States, Little League served as such a supply, and it is the goal of this paper to explore what social demands organized youth baseball met. This is not, therefore, an institutional or social history of Little League baseball; very little attention is paid to the day-to-day workings of organized youth baseball. Rather it is an attempt to see how a number of actors, including parents and children, politicians, corporate leaders and Little League officials, used Little League baseball as a means, a powerful symbol, to adjust to the changing postwar climate. By examining how the postwar generation used Little League baseball as such a symbol—how they used the game to speak to their own material realities and ideological perceptions—one begins to see not only why Little League proved so popular during the postwar era but also how American culture and political economy were shaped, used, and ultimately contested during this period. Yet this relationship between Little League baseball and postwar American society was not unproblematic, for the world of youth baseball was filled with the same tensions and anxieties that marked the larger culture, particularly surrounding issues of consumption, gender, race, and individual authenticity. While this essay is primarily concerned with understanding how Little League baseball allowed a sort of consensus to be reached on such issues, it will highlight—however incompletely—how such tensions helped lay the groundwork for undermining this system of postwar liberalism by the mid 1960s. This essay explores in-depth how the liberal politics of the postwar order reached its apogee, and hints at how it was ultimately brought down. It will be up to other scholars to track how this latter process played out.

All of this attention to the broader culture in which Little League flourished does not mean that this essay seeks to exist outside of the rich historiography of work on baseball in the United States. While there has been little scholarly work done on the history of Little

League itself,⁷ there have been many studies on the sport that focus on a number of the crucial issues explored in this essay, including the relationship between baseball and consumption, the ways in which baseball could prepare individuals for life in business and industry, and the potential compensatory qualities of the sport. The work of Mark Dyreson, for example, highlights how baseball, in the 1920s, opened up new avenues for the continued growth of consumer culture, while the work of Steven A. Reiss illustrates the ideological work that baseball often performed during the Progressive Era for those reformers attempting to help American citizens acclimate themselves to dramatic changes in the nation's political economy.⁸

In many ways, my treatment of Little League baseball is simply a natural extension of this literature: the names and dates may have changed, but the sport is still seen as performing many of the same tasks it did close to one hundred years before the first Little League game was played. Part of the narrative of Little League is therefore a telling story of consistency within the history of baseball in the United States. As historian Jules Tygiel notes, each generation of Americans “reinvented the national pastime to fit its own material reality and ideological perceptions,” and this process has often looked remarkably similar throughout the span of U.S. history. Yet it must be stressed that much of the rise of Little League was without historical precedent. As the bulk of the historiography on American baseball reveals, the sport was primarily an urban phenomenon. Moreover, the sport was geared toward adult players, and games were often organized through industrial-sponsored leagues. The rise of Little League baseball—by blossoming in suburban locales and targeting preadolescent players—turned such a history on its head. The story of Little League baseball is essentially the story of the exploding postwar suburb and the increasing awareness of the societal and economic importance of perhaps suburbia's most important dweller, the pre-adolescent child. Little League baseball helped adults and children alike come to terms with the growing predominance of the American suburb, and—as it will be shown—often even helped physically to shape such communities. At the same time, as such historians as Steven Mintz have shown, the rise of suburbia coincided with the discovery of the child as an important, and previously untapped, market segment. Once again, Little League provided an avenue through which to discuss and confirm such new consumption patterns, and, in the process, placed the pre-adolescent male at the center of the American sporting experience. It is through an awareness of such heretofore unexplored relationships that this essay hopes to add not only to the literature on postwar American culture but also to the historiography of sport in U.S. history.⁹

From the Public to the Private:

Little League and the Changing Nature of Family and Gender

In the summer of 1952, Mr. H.M. Clegg of suburban El Paso, Texas, wrote a glowing letter of appreciation to Little League headquarters in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. As a father of two sons, Clegg expressed his gratitude for a program that provided for children such a healthy, supervised recreational activity and allowed him an arena where he could bond with his two boys. Little League, Clegg maintained, had kept his children from traveling down the dangerous path to juvenile delinquency “by channeling the efforts of such youngsters into wholesome recreation rather than mischievousness and acts of van-

dalism.” While he was once concerned about the type of young men that his boys would become, he was now relieved to see that his sons—as a direct result of Little League baseball—were now “two of the happiest and most easily managed boys any parents could hope to find.” They would grow up, Clegg concluded, to be strong, upstanding men.¹⁰

Yet Clegg brought another perspective to bear on Little League baseball. As his letter went on to reveal, Clegg was a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent whose work brought him into daily contact with murderers, rapists, and other violent criminals. After detailing how Little League had helped his two sons, Clegg then turned his attention to an encounter he had recently had with one of these barbarous offenders. In April of 1952, Clegg had helped to apprehend Lloyd Edison Sampsell, a drifter who subsequently confessed to a particularly vicious murder. Following his apprehension, Sampsell had discussed with Clegg the reasons why he had turned to a life of violence. According to Clegg, Sampsell said that he had had no family to supervise him as a young man (and, more importantly, no positive father figure) and thus no outlets for his youthful energies outside of a life of crime. If he could furnish any advice to a youngster to avoid the pattern of life that he fell into, he would have that young boy participate in an organized sports program like Little League baseball. “A boy has to learn to win or lose,” Sampsell told Clegg. “If he doesn’t master that ability while a youth, he will find it most difficult to do so as a man.” Little League, Clegg concluded, provided such a lesson, and thereby made his job as in law enforcement much easier. If they learned these lessons at a young age, such boys would be less likely to find themselves apprehended by such law enforcement officials as Clegg in the future.¹¹

As Clegg’s letter illustrates, there was great concern in the postwar era regarding the issue of juvenile delinquency. Everywhere parents looked in the postwar era, they were confronted with the perceived rise of juvenile delinquency. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover reported in 1955 that crime in the United States was going up at an alarming rate—“20% higher now than in the immediate post-war period.” And young people, according to Hoover, were fueling this increase. In 1955, one out of every thirty-five youths between the ages of ten and seventeen had been arrested, an increase of 10 percent over the previous year. Hoover also found that an incredible 42 percent of those arrested for major crimes were persons under the age of eighteen, and of that number, more than one-half were under the age of fifteen. Lawmakers, clearly troubled by such statistics, entered into the great juvenile delinquency debate, as Congress discussed nearly 200 bills relating to juvenile delinquency in 1955 alone.¹²

Perhaps even more frightening than this rise in youth-instigated crime was the increasingly violent and sexual nature of this delinquency. Historian George Chauncey has shown that such acts led to a full-blown sex crime panic in the postwar era, as a growing number of newspaper and magazines focused the nation’s attention on the grisly murders of women and children. These crimes, the press maintained, were the result of men and young boys who had lost control of their deviant sexual impulses, leading to a major new threat to the American family: the “sex criminal.” Making matters even worse was the notion that this behavior was tied to parenting skills. “Abnormal sex behavior, be it in the adult or child,” asserted Dr. Benjamin Karpman (chief psychotherapist at Washington, D.C.’s prestigious St. Elizabeth’s Hospital and one of the decade’s most influential medical writers on sex offenses), “derives from the unwholesome family and social atmosphere in

which the child develops. The fault lies with the parents.” Other medical experts echoed his sentiments, arguing that juvenile delinquency resulted directly from adult neglect. What was needed, as the editors of influential publications covering sex crimes often noted, were new measures to combat this unwholesome atmosphere.¹³

To many postwar actors, Little League baseball served as such a measure, as it was a highly supervised activity that engendered in children a healthy respect for law and order, taught proper gender roles, and, most importantly, brought families together. “In the anxious years when juvenile delinquency affords heartaches to many families, the existence of the Little League program,” explained Little League President Peter McGovern, “is one of the best guarantees we have, in a large part of America, to hold the family together in common interest.” At its root, the discourse on juvenile delinquency came to both symbolize a series of fears and expectations regarding the child’s place in this rapidly changing world and to act as a concrete manifestation of these concerns. Within this charged discussion, Little League baseball became an arena where postwar actors could make such fears more manageable, and, in the process, help alleviate these anxieties by making the issue of child crime seem a solvable problem. As the content of Clegg’s letter begins to illustrate, organized youth baseball, for such disparate actors as parents, law enforcement officials, politicians, and Little League officials, became an effective means to regain a sense of control over the lives of the nation’s children and keep the evolving concept of the postwar family from imploding. In the face of the “nightmarish revelations” of rising youth crime statistics, Little League baseball offered, in the words of J. Edgar Hoover, “a common sense counter agency against delinquency.” Little League baseball held the promise of saving a boy from the world of juvenile delinquency and returning him to his proper place in the family structure. “My boy,” wrote the father of one formally troublesome lad, “is much more obedient since joining Little League.”¹⁴

Explicit in Little League’s effectiveness in combating juvenile delinquency was the belief that youth baseball not only brought families together but also taught young people proper gender roles, thereby creating the “wholesome” family atmosphere that Dr. Kaufman and other experts thought would keep children out of trouble. During the early postwar years, there was still much anxiety regarding the future of the family. While economic conditions caused women to delay having children during the 1930s, postwar families ushered in a baby boom that resulted in the largest absolute population increase in the nation’s history. Births rose from a low of 18.4 per 1,000 women during the Great Depression to a high of 25.3 per 1,000 in 1957. At the same time, countless families—like the Cleggs—made the move to the new suburbs that had sprouted up around the country. Federal home loan policies stimulated migrations to the suburbs from traditional, urban, ethnic working-class neighborhoods. Housing starts exploded after World War II, peaking at 1.65 million in 1955 and remaining above 1.5 million a year for the rest of the decade. Perhaps most dramatically, the increase in single-family homeownership between 1946 and 1956 outstripped the increase during the entire preceding century and a half. By 1960, 62 percent of all American families owned their own homes, in contrast to 43 percent in 1940. Eighty-five percent of these new homes were in the suburbs.¹⁵

In this new environment, the family was portrayed as “the basis of our free society,” yet many Americans seemed to have trouble coming to terms as to exactly how this familial unit should come together and function. “We hear the cry of the educators and police

officers all the time that families are drifting apart,” worried one postwar parent in a Little League publication. In this troubled environment, youth baseball was seen as the means to bring the family together under a common interest. Parents seemed relieved to have an activity that included all family members. “My husband is a director of one Little League and our son plays in another league,” explained Little League mother V. A. Ames of Syracuse, New York. “Every night, during the season, we are together (father, mother, daughter, and son) at the ball field.” As a result, Mrs. Ames concluded, her family had never felt closer. Across the country, the press picked up on this capability of Little League and urged all families having trouble functioning as a cohesive unit to turn to youth baseball. *The Chicago Daily News*, for example, found that “one beneficial result [of participation in Little League baseball] is the strong influence the program exerts for a family to pull together. Little League deserves praise for its role in welding into a unit, the members of family.”¹⁶

In addition to bringing families together, Little League also provided an area for young people to learn proper gender roles—another crucial step in maintaining familial cohesiveness and in dealing with the problem of criminal activity among young people. Youth baseball, in short, allowed young people the opportunity to see how men and women ought to behave. For if Little League made young boys participants in the world of youth athletics, it also transformed them into spectators. Little League baseball allowed young boys to watch their fathers act in positions of authority and, in turn, take a crucial step in their development into healthy adult males. According to one Little League official: “Parents and child guidance authorities know well the need for a positive relationship between father and son in the critical latent period of a boy’s development. Boys of Little League benefit by these masculine developments.” At the same time, they observed the type of behavior, through the activity of their mothers, which was to be termed “feminine.” This understanding of proper, strictly divided, gender roles became vitally important in the postwar era, as confusion over the differences between men and women among young people was seen as leading to perhaps the greatest threat to family stability; the dreaded juvenile delinquency.¹⁷

Yet if youth baseball taught young boys how to act masculine, it also helped parents come to terms with the evolving concepts of gender and family in the postwar era. As historians Elaine Tyler May and Stephanie Coontz have noted, it was only in the immediate postwar period that what we now consider as “traditional” gender roles—bread-winning father and stay-at-home mother, both focused on the well-being of their children—took shape. Such a development was a qualitatively new phenomenon. Once content to leave all of the parenting to the mother, postwar fathers were expected to take a much more active role in the raising of their children, particularly their sons. As children took on this added level of significance, the role of the father in the child-rearing process also gained in importance. At the same time, men had to readjust to their role as primary provider for the family unit, while women had to come to terms with their return to the domestic sphere. Less than fifteen years earlier, the Great Depression had seen a large number of wives and mothers (as well as children) leave the household and take jobs to provide secondary or even primary support for their families. This trend continued well into World War II, as men left their families for prolonged periods of time to join the armed forces overseas and women replaced them in the American workforce. The end of

the war was supposed to put an end to this situation, as men were expected to reenter the workforce, and women were supposed to defer to this arrangement.¹⁸

Undoubtedly, such developments were wrought with tension, as both men and women struggled to recognize the changes occurring in male/female relationships. Little League provided an arena through which both men and women could address such tensions and attempt to find their place in the emerging postwar family structure. Through Little League baseball, men, for example, could portray themselves as strong, assertive leaders, while women could devote themselves to the behind-the-scenes work that helped youth baseball leagues develop and flourish. And all of this took place on the Little League field, amidst other families struggling to come to terms with these fundamental changes. While historians such as May see many Americans addressing these changes to gender roles in the private sphere of the home (which May defines as “a secure private nest removed from the dangers of the outside world”), it appears that a large number of people wished to approach these changes communally. There is little doubt that the home played a crucial role in the evolution of postwar gender roles, but the Little League experience suggests that the public sphere also played an important role in the rise of the “traditional” family structure. For many Americans, the experiences of the Great Depression and World War II had taught them to approach their problems collectively. This collectivist approach seemed to carry over into the postwar era, as many Americans looked outward (rather than simply inward) to make sense of this changing world. Before men and women could become entirely comfortable with their new roles in the privacy of their own homes—within the private sphere—they sought to understand them better within the realm of the familiar public sphere, where they could come to terms with the newly structured family collectively. Little League baseball provided this comfortable setting.¹⁹

Little League baseball clearly gave men in the postwar era an avenue through which to redefine their familial role. As the family breadwinner, the father was to be seen as strong, decisive, masculine. On the Little League field, the father could be all of these things. Through such acts as building playing fields, running practice sessions, and making managerial decisions, a father could put behind the traumas of the Great Depression and World War II and portray himself as a dynamic representation of virile manhood. As more was expected of him as a father, Little League gave him the avenue to carve out a new relationship with his son, through the familiar game of baseball. “In baseball,” one Little League father explained, “a father and son meet on a common ground from which blooms companionship, respect and real love.”²⁰

Little League baseball also provided women with the opportunity to come to terms with their new gender role in the comfort and safety of the public sphere. As the role of the father became more important in the postwar era, mothers were told to stay in the background, providing necessary emotional and domestic support. Mothers involved in Little League formed Women’s Auxiliary Groups that provided behind-the-scenes support for their ball-playing sons. Not surprisingly, such support often mirrored the type of domestic duties that women were supposed to be becoming comfortable performing in the privacy of their homes. These women’s groups held bake sales, served as cooks and waitresses at league banquets, and cooked and catered after-game picnics for their tired Little Leaguers. One group of mothers in the suburban California West Valley Little League even went so far as to compile a cookbook entitled, “Batting 1.000 in the Kitchen.”

This collection of recipes was dedicated to all Little League mothers “who have ever asked, or will ask in the future, ‘What do you serve on game night besides hot dogs?’” While postwar fathers saw their parental role in terms of helping their sons develop physically, mothers saw themselves as providing much-needed nourishment, literally and figuratively. Mothers were needed to help young males develop emotionally, both on the field and in the home. Each role was critically important in the development of the child. “There is room,” concluded one observer of youth baseball, “for both in Little League.”²¹

“Future Major Leaguer? . . . Perhaps. Future *Man*? . . . Definitely!”:

Little League and the Changing World of Work

One cannot, however, talk about issues of family and gender in the postwar period without discussing the changing nature of work. In many ways, Little League reflected the complexities that went along with these changes and even helped both adults as well as children come to terms with such transformations to the nation’s economy. During the war, more than 500,000 small retail, service, and construction companies went out of business. Some of these companies fell victim to the more than 1,600 mergers that occurred during the war, nearly one-third of which involved corporations with assets of over \$50 million taking over smaller enterprises. In this changing environment, men found themselves turning to these large corporations—rather than striking out on their own—for employment. Firms with less than 500 employees employed 52 percent of the workers in manufacturing in 1939, but only 38 percent in 1944. At the same time, firms with 10,000 or more employees accounted for 13 percent of total employment in 1939, but more than 31 percent by 1944.²²

“The deterioration of the small business economy during the war,” writes historian George Lipsitz, “had important social consequences.” Psychologically, the belief that any man could start his own small business had been a strong symbol of American freedom throughout the nation’s history, and its increasing impracticality forced many Americans to face a life of working for others. Perhaps more importantly, postwar males had to adjust to life within these heavily bureaucratized corporations. “In terms of sexual stereotypes,” according to historian Peter Filene, the world of the postwar corporation “was a feminine world.” As described by contemporary sociologist David Riesman in his best-selling *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), a change in national “character types” was occurring. The business world had less and less room for the aggressive, self-motivated, entrepreneurial, “inner-directed” personality characteristic of the nineteenth-century free market economy. The modern business world, Riesman heuristically noted, was beginning to call for a conformist, “other-directed” character type, one more sensitive to peer and social opinion than his inner-directed predecessor. Gone were the days of hard, physical work. The successful worker in the postwar era had to master the complicated practices of personnel relations. Workers had to learn what Warren Susman termed the art of “personality.” With the larger corporations that dotted the postwar landscape becoming more and more prevalent, “[e]very American was to become a performing self.”²³

America, however, did not undergo such a rapid change in national character overnight. Rather, the transition from inner-directed to other-directed was a gradual transition, one that was never quite as straightforward as Riesman and others often suggested.

For the men attempting to make sense of these changes, Little League baseball provided a lens through which to view the complexities of this evolution, as well as a means to ease this transition. Understanding that there was less and less room for creativity and individuality in the increasingly bureaucratic workplace, such individuals began to look to the world of leisure to find the fulfillment they once found in the realm of work. Little League baseball gave such men the opportunity to find this fulfillment on the baseball diamond, by acting as managers, coaches, and even spectators. More importantly, Little League baseball performed what can best be understood as a compensatory role for the men coming to terms with the rise of the corporate work world. If the highly bureaucratic nature of corporate work was forcing postwar men to indeed become “other-directed,” Little League baseball allowed them to continue to express their “inner-directed” side. On the baseball field, men could forget about the world of personality and embrace a game based on aggressiveness, self-motivation, and physical energy. As one advocate of Little League baseball put it: “Those adults who work directly with Little League also benefit from it because it gives them active participation rather than passive.” And this active participation allowed those who spent their workday pushing papers in the bureaucratized corporation to see themselves as productive once again. “To be productive was to be fulfilled,” notes a recent study of the postwar era, and “relief from one kind of work could be found through another kind of work.” Little League, in short, provided this relief.²⁴

One begins to see how postwar men turned to Little League for the opportunity to engage in productive physical labor through their attention to the construction of elaborate playing fields. One journalist, for example, marveled at the amount of sheer physical energy that fathers in Naugatuck, Connecticut, expended in the construction of a Little League field in 1949. Realizing that the only available site for the playing field was too small, the fathers of Naugatuck went to work and burrowed into the side of an intruding hill, excavating some 3,000 cubic yards of earth. Yet the laborers did not stop there. They went on to install stationary bleachers, a permanent backstop, a clubhouse, refreshment stands, and a public-address system. When they were done they had a tangible symbol of their labor—a recreational facility valued at over \$75,000. “The amount of energy which has gone into furnishing Little League facilities throughout the country,” wrote Arthur Daley after observing the efforts of the Naugatuck fathers, “stuns the imagination.” For a group of men used to laboring day in and day out without producing anything they could tangibly hold, the completion of such a facility was undoubtedly physically, emotionally, and psychologically satisfying.²⁵

The same story was repeated all across the country. In Canton, Ohio, a “group of fathers, team managers and coaches” even labored at night to finish their field, parking their cars around the plot to illuminate the area with the headlights of their autos. In Altadena, California, “[h]elp came from unexpected sources. Dads rolled up their sleeves and went to work with pick and shovel.” And dads were going to work with their picks and shovels at an amazing rate during the postwar era. A 1953 Springfield College survey of 744 suburban communities with playing facilities found that 64.5 percent had developed new facilities and fields for Little League play. A total of 712 fields had been built in these communities, twenty-one sites were currently under construction, and five more were planned for 1953. If all of these fields were completed, the result would have been 738 new fields in 744 communities. The image of professional fathers “rolling up their

sleeves” proved so popular in this period that it even made its way into popular literature. In the popular 1954 children’s book *Little League Champions*, one young Little Leaguer, worrying about the possibility of not having an adequate playing field for the start of his season, finds comfort in the fact that his “dad and the office workers’ll come over this Saturday” and finish construction at the site. “They can do a good job,” the boy confidently predicted, even though “[h]andling a shovel might put blisters on their lily-white hands.” To men who now found themselves spending days in bureaucratic organizations, blisters helped prove they were still men.²⁶

Through these examples of field construction, one can see how Little League provided a much-needed physical challenge to postwar men. But what about on the intellectual side? Here, the role that fathers played as managers helped compensate for the loss of intellectual authority inherent in the postwar world of work. As managers, fathers oversaw the preseason tryout session that enabled them to grade all league “candidates” according to their abilities. As soon as the rating process was completed, each manager was assigned 36,000 credits—“it’s like having \$36,000 of play money” observed one journalist—with which to “buy” players and put together their team. All players thus “purchased” became the permanent property of their “owners” for the rest of their Little League careers. Managers did have the power, however, to trade or even outright buy other players, provided they had enough credits to make the deal.²⁷

Writing on parenthood in the postwar era, Elaine Tyler May finds that
in the face of the highly organized world of work that stripped men of their
autonomy, fatherhood could be a substitute source of meaning and creativity.
Presumably, nowhere else was it easier for a man to be his own boss than in
fatherhood.²⁸

And nowhere was it easier for a man to be his own boss than on the Little League diamond. By acting as Little League managers, postwar fathers could exercise the authority and express the creativity that they once had expressed in the world of work. On the baseball field, the postwar father could see himself as the leader of a collection of underlings, free to buy and sell them as he pleased. For those men who found themselves stuck in the middle management levels of the great bureaucracies of the era, such power was undoubtedly intoxicating.

But what about the young males themselves? In many ways, Little League, like it did for postwar fathers, provided a compensatory outlet for the expression of identity and the release of masculine energies. Moreover, it taught them to look to the realm of leisure to meet these needs, rather than the realm of work. In a world where conformity and bureaucracy reigned supreme, Little League baseball gave the young person, according to one observer, the “abundant opportunity for the expression of individuality.” Knowing that such boys faced a life of work separated from physical labor, a world where “technology has changed the character of American life,” proponents of Little League saw youth baseball as the means to teach boys to begin looking to the world of leisure to express their masculinity. “With the mechanization of so many of today’s activities,” declared one Little League advocate, “the present generation of boys lack many of the opportunities for the free, independent release of muscular and nervous energies that we enjoyed only a few decades ago” in the realm of the workplace. Within the world of baseball, young boys could find a new arena in which to release these energies.²⁹

Little League, however, served as more than a compensatory measure for postwar youths. In many ways, the economy of postwar America did call for a new personality type, and Little League undoubtedly helped prepare many young people for their place in this “other-directed” world. While the shift may not have been as pronounced as Riesman and others have indicated, there was a sense that the economy of the United States had been dramatically altered, and that something had to be done to prepare young people for this new world. Youth baseball was seen as capable of providing this preparation. The system of buying and selling young players, for example, may have had an effect on the Little Leaguers themselves. Through such a system, young players could become comfortable with the notion that a certain sense of independence had indeed been lost, that their labor could be bought and sold. Indeed, they themselves could be viewed as commodities. Little League baseball can thus be seen as what historian Steven M. Gelber describes as a “disguised affirmation,” a cultural tool that helps “to sustain the overarching ideology of capitalism by serving up its ideas in the palatable form of domestic leisure.” Through Little League, young boys were indeed introduced to such capitalist concepts as specialization (nine-year-old boys deciding that they are assuredly shortstops) and rationalization (in the shape of regular practice sessions). Yet numerous advocates of Little League—ranging from parents to League officials to corporate leaders—saw organized youth baseball as performing a much more specific task in the postwar era. Parents realized that the economic changes wrought after World War II were there to stay, and both fathers and mothers faced “the task of trying to keep a world [they] never knew and never dreamed steady until we can rear a generation at home in it.”³⁰ Little League thus became a means for adults to acclimate young males to these changes, a program that not only prepared boys for their future role in the highly bureaucratized corporate world of work but also helped parents come to terms with these tremendous changes. Here, Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* nicely illustrates how Little League helped propagate certain elements of postwar American culture. According to Bourdieu, the *habitus*

is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g. of language, economy, etc.) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions, in the organisms (which one can, if one wishes, call individuals) lastingly subjected to the same conditionings, and hence placed in the same material conditions of existence.³¹

Little League can thus be read as helping to create the *habitus* of postwar liberal capitalism, conditioning young people to accept such dispositions as specialization, rationalization, and bureaucratization.

Through such a process, Little League began to be seen as a way to prepare young people for life in the professional and bureaucratic world. In one way, Little League made young boys to begin to think about a career at an early age. Pre-adolescent males began to dream about careers in the major leagues and to mimic the behavior of their professional idols. Postwar parents, unsure as to whether or not their children would be able to fit into this highly professionalized world, were thrilled to see this. A mother, writing to a Little League publication, relayed how much she was impressed by the way that the behavior of the young players mirrored that of major leaguers. Both Little League publications and national newspapers and magazines ran a number of stories on the successes of former

Little Leaguers in the majors, and how such players, in the words of professional Bob Turley, saw youth baseball as crucial “early training for success as a major leaguer.” Little League baseball was increasingly seen as a type of preparation for later professional life. Both Little League officials and postwar businesses and corporations warmed to these comparisons between youngsters and professional athletes. As one advertisement from Oliver Brothers uniforms (that featured a Little League player explaining his preference for Oliver Brothers uniforms) put it: “Oliver *Suits Me—Just Like a Professional.*” Little League participants were viewed as more than simply amateur ball players. Little League baseball began to be seen as simply one stop on the trajectory of young people’s professional lives.³²

However, all parties involved in Little League realized that very few boys would ever make it to the major leagues. More important, therefore, were the more general values that Little League inculcated in youth that would help them fit into the corporate, professional world. Or, as one sponsor of Little League posed it: “Future Major Leaguer? . . . Perhaps. Future *Man*? . . . Definitely!” And this man must fit into a bureaucratic world, where issues of teamwork, personality, and organization were crucial to success. With these issues in mind, parents truly saw Little League as helping their children adapt to the postwar environment. One father believed that Little League baseball had taught his son the prized skill of personality—how to become a performing self. Ecstatically, he proclaimed, “my wife and her parents have noticed this new sociability and outwardness in Stevie [age 10]. So have his delighted teachers.” Other parents were amazed by the “professional poise and sobriety” that Little League instilled in their sons, who “seemed to thrive on competition, growing more poised, more relaxed and more confident as they went along,” all while learning to function as part of a team. Yet despite the tension inherent in Little League games, “not one kid squawked to an umpire.” Little League, in short, helped the postwar lad become, in the terminology of contemporary sociologist William H. Whyte, the perfect “Organization Man.” Through Little League, young males learned how to function effectively as part of a group—the skill that Whyte referred to as “togetherness.” Moreover, in a business climate that prized conformity, Little League taught young boys to accept the authority and decisions of superiors. Little Leaguers, observers found, were adapting so well to the postwar environment that they could teach their parents a thing or two about corporate life. “Adults Could Take a Leaf From Little Leaguers’ Book,” announced a newspaper headline in 1960.³³

Not surprisingly, postwar corporations also began to take notice of Little League. To such firms, Little League had the potential to create a workforce that would help them thrive in the years after World War II. The boys who participated in Little League were, in the words of a General Electric advertisement (strategically placed in *Little Leaguer* magazine), “tomorrow’s leaders,” future men who needed the necessary training “to play a position on the big American team of business, industry, and agriculture.” Little League was seen as instilling in young people the values of “fair play,” “hard competition,” and “good working habits”—values that would guarantee “success in your chosen profession.” More specifically, Little League was seen by numerous corporations as teaching the values of “teamwork” and “organization” to “boys at an early age,” skills seen as necessary to succeed in the postwar order. “The success of the infield combination that makes the most double

plays,” explained a General Motors advertisement, “is the result of long practice and good organization. . . . Just like the infielders awaiting the crack of the bat, your work should be organized, too.” As one might expect, it was industries that had the greatest stake in the propagation of such corporate skills as teamwork and organization—such as the automobile industry—that became the strongest advocates of Little League. Such industry leaders as Henry Ford III, president of the Ford Motor Company, and E. C. Quinn, president of the Chrysler Division of the Chrysler Corporation, became outspoken supporters of Little League, and contributed to the program (as did other firms with high stakes in the postwar corporate order).³⁴

Yet corporate leaders, Little League officials, and parents saw youth baseball as preparing children for corporate life in another, albeit rather unusual, way—by preparing them to fail. “Everybody loses at times,” explained a Little League-sponsored publication. “It’s true not only in baseball but in all of life. A salesman doesn’t always make a sale.” “Life,” continued the book, “is filled with disappointments. There is no better way to get ready to meet them than by playing Little League baseball.” Many heads of corporations, including Henry Ford III, echoed this sentiment, arguing that all young boys had to learn “the rules of the game,” and this included how to lose gracefully. Parents also saw this benefit of Little League. Little League dad, David J. Kerr of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, wrote:

Many of the experts on juvenile delinquency attribute the growing crime rate among the nation’s youth to the fact that today’s youngsters are badly pampered and spoiled. They don’t know what it means not to get what they want. The taste of defeat is not sweet, but certainly is a flavor frequently encountered in the business and social world.³⁵

Little League helped prepare pre-adolescent boys, many of whom were destined to become the denizens of the middle circles of bureaucracy, for the simple fact that very few of them would reach very high levels of achievement in the world of work. Once they realized this, as the letters of both Kerr and Clegg point out, such boys were less likely to turn to juvenile delinquency. By teaching children how to lose at an early age, organized youth baseball, in other words, not only promised to help keep young people in line once they entered the world of work but also guaranteed their good behavior throughout adolescence.

Constructing the “Business Spiral”:

Little League Baseball and the Culture of Consumption

Yet Little League did more than teach young boys about the intricacies of gender and work in postwar America; it also educated them on the rising U.S. consumer culture of this period. On December 3, 1947, Little League founder Carl Stotz met with Charles Durban, assistant advertising director for U.S. Rubber (who would become Little League’s chairman of the board in 1950), in the firm’s New York City office. Stotz had come to New York seeking assistance in the creation of a safe shoe for Little League players to wear as well as general financial support for his burgeoning program. By 1948 U.S. Rubber had marketed, under its Keds trademark, the first rubber-cleated athletic shoe designed specifically for the Little League player. During the same year, U.S. Rubber became Little League’s chief financial sponsor, allowing Stotz to concentrate on Little League full-time

and to bring his game to the national level. Why did U.S. Rubber make such a financial decision? Not surprisingly, Durban, like other industry leaders noted above, liked the fact that Little League taught the “value of teamwork, discipline, and fair play.” Yet there was more to this decision to back Little League than the values it was perceived to instill in young people. After the change to peacetime production, U.S. Rubber sought to establish a strong presence in the postwar economy, particularly within products associated with the expanding suburbs (including such automobile parts as steering wheels, fan belts, engine mountings, tires, and tubes). Moreover, U.S. Rubber also began to realize that a crucial component of this suburban economy were children, both in the manner by which they could influence their parents’ buying decisions and the ways they were becoming independent consumers themselves. To Peter McGovern, a director of public relations for U.S. Rubber who became president of Little League in 1952, such young people were “vital, growing and the very personification of a dynamic today and tomorrow.” These youngsters “buy through their parents today and later for themselves. They are young, healthy, impressionable.” For U.S. Rubber, Little League seemed to provide an avenue through which to enter the emerging suburban economy and reach the consumers of tomorrow.³⁶

Based on postwar statistics, it appears that companies like U.S. Rubber were quite successful in exploiting such avenues. Spending on personal consumption, measured in 1954 dollars, increased from \$128.1 billion in 1920 to \$195.6 billion in 1947, and to \$298.1 billion in 1960. Not surprisingly, suburbanization was helping to fuel this boom, as the majority of spending during this period was on household appliances and automobiles. Nearly 8 million cars were produced in 1955; the prewar high had been 4.5 million in 1929. Such spending spurred the national economy to greater and greater heights. The gross national product (GNP), measured in constant 1954 dollars, rose from \$181.8 billion in 1929 to \$282.3 billion in 1947. By 1960 the GNP had increased further by 56 percent, reaching \$439.9 billion, as the idea and reality of mass consumption had become absolutely central to American culture. U.S. Rubber’s net sales rose from \$471,506,000 in 1945 to \$925,539,000 in 1955. This reality seemed to affect all U.S. citizens, regardless of ideological orientation. “Across the political spectrum,” writes historian Jackson Lears, all Americans “accepted the same basic assumption that postwar America was a homogeneous mass-consumption society.”³⁷

Yet the rise of a mass consumer culture was not preordained. In the immediate postwar environment, both policy makers and manufacturers alike worried that Americans would not embrace the concept of consumption at the level necessary to maintain wartime levels of production and employment. To those worried about maintaining such levels of economic activity, the key question of the postwar era was how to stimulate consumer spending among the nation’s population. Often, this task of persuasion was exceedingly difficult, as many Americans entered the postwar period with the traumas of the Great Depression and World War II still clearly in mind. As the work of such scholars as George Lipsitz has shown, cultural products like television programs served as instruments of legitimation for this new consumer-based economy, helping the generation of Americans who had come of age in the era of the Great Depression become more comfortable with their new lives in the suburbs and the simple notion of buying more.³⁸

But what about the children of the postwar era? Such children were, as U.S. Rubber's Peter McGovern noted, the future of this consumption-based society, "the very personification of a dynamic today and tomorrow." How did these youngsters become acclimated to this consumption-based society? In the immediate postwar era, Little League baseball, as the example of U.S. Rubber begins to illustrate, performed such a legitimating function, allowing businesses to enter suburbia and help children begin to see themselves as consumers. By drawing upon the symbolically powerful worlds of youth and baseball and making the connection between Little League and consumption, such postwar firms also helped parents come to terms with the continued rise of consumer culture. Yet Little League did more than simply acclimate both youth and adults to the world of consumption. To such Little League officials as Peter McGovern, Little League also served as a type of cultural mediator for the burgeoning consumer, protecting him from overconsumption and other dangers associated with mass culture. Through Little League, such officials concluded, youngsters could learn how to become responsible consumers.

Once U.S. Rubber became the chief financial sponsor of Little League baseball and was granted exclusive rights to manufacture Little League rubber cleats, a number of other businesses began to see youth baseball players as a specialized market, one that called for a specialized product. Companies such as Spalding, Johnson&Johnson, Rawlings, and Wilson all saw the benefit of marketing products specifically to Little Leaguers. Sporting goods companies began to produce such products as "Official Little League Baseballs," "Little League Model Bats," "Official Little League Shoes," even Little League athletic supporters. All of this equipment was designed with the smaller ball player in mind, "scaled down in size to fit the future greats of the game." Sporting goods companies began to advertise in Little League magazines and even sponsor Little League publications, such as the *Official Rulebook of Little League Baseball*. This book of Little League regulations was sponsored in 1953 by Wilson, by Spalding in 1955, and by MacGregor in 1957. This pattern of sponsorship was clearly an advertising ploy. In the 1953 rulebook, for example, twelve of the forty-nine pages were devoted to Wilson advertisements. The result of such campaigns was that advertisers and Little League officials began to become more comfortable seeing children as distinct consumers and even to begin to see them as a specialized market in the postwar economy, loyal to a brand name: "Little League." "This is Little League Edition," exclaimed a happy lad pictured in *Little Leaguer* magazine as he unwrapped a new baseball glove under the Christmas tree in 1954.³⁹

Perhaps more importantly, postwar businesses were able to use Little League baseball to teach young boys to desire more. Not only did such sporting goods companies market a new line of bats and gloves each year, but they also produced more and more accessories as the postwar era progressed. Little Leaguers were told that they needed a "toe plate for right-handed pitcher[s]," "sliding pads," "sanitary hose," and "garters." This pattern of buying among Little Leaguers led to what was termed "A Business Spiral" by a number of observers. According to the Athletic Goods Manufacturer's Association, 9,724,676 baseballs were sold in 1957 of which professional and adult amateur groups purchased only 1,513,680. There were 4,316,244 bats sold, of which 2,017,116 were Little League types. By 1961, industry leaders estimated that sales of athletic equipment to Little Leaguers had reached close to \$20 million. As Little League was proud to point out, much of the increase in sales of baseball equipment during the postwar years "can be attributed to Little

League.” Not only did the program provide a substantial market in itself, but many of the boys continued to play baseball—and buy more athletic equipment—as they aged because of interest and skill they developed as Little Leaguers. In other words, once comfortable with their role as consumer, young boys would continue to consume as they reached maturity.⁴⁰

Once children began to see themselves distinctly as consumers, postwar businesses proceeded to employ them as part of an advertising strategy to reach parents and influence their buying decisions in the emerging suburban economy. Children, in short, could become a powerful means through which to convince adults to consume more. Perhaps most obviously, the practice of printing the name of the business sponsor on a team’s uniforms made this connection between children and consumption most explicit. Yet this approach of coupling children with consumption went even deeper. A 1955 advertisement for Chrysler that ran in *Little Leaguer* illustrated this strategy. “Why don’t you and your Dad go down to your friendly Plymouth, Dodge, DeSoto, or Chrysler dealer,” the advertisement asked its youthful reader, “and take a demonstration drive in a car with THE FORWARD LOOK?”⁴¹ As children came to symbolize postwar hopes and aspirations, such advertising tactics intimately conjoined issues of consumption with images of a bright, prosperous future. Children exemplified “the forward look” itself, and a crucial component of this progressive vision of the future, as constructed by postwar business interests, was increased consumption. Ultimately, this connection between children and consumption helped put a human, hopeful face on the expanding consumer culture, allowing parents to feel comfortable buying more and more.

By 1952 the business press had come to realize the commercial potential of Little League, particularly in terms of the sheer number of spectators it brought to games. “Little Leagues played 7,000 games a week last year over a 10-week season,” announced *Business Week*. “With an average of 300 spectators at each game, season attendance is estimated at roughly 20 million (Major league attendance last year was 16 million).” Soon, such “big-time” outfits as Monsanto Chemical, General Electric, and Chrysler were sponsoring teams and beginning to advertise in Little League publications. Not surprisingly, industries that catered to the suburban market were quick to see the marketing power of Little League. In suburban Miami, forty-one businesses competed for four league sponsorships. Articles on the benefits of sponsoring Little Leagues and advertising in Little League publications began to appear in such industry publications as *The Esso Dealer*, *The First Federal Saver* (the publication of the First Federal Savings of Chicago, serving much of the suburban Chicago area), the *Sinclair Dealer News*, *The Prudential Bulletin*, and the *Oldsmobile Rocket Circle*. While many of these companies did portray their involvement in Little League as a form of “community betterment,” most saw Little League as a way to increase business. “It isn’t unusual,” explained Robert Hemperly, manager of a Sinclair service station that sponsored a Williamsport-area Little League team, “to have a complete stranger drop into the service station and buy gas because his boy suggested it to him.” Or as a Motorola executive explained more crudely in a memo to distributors describing a promotion designed to tie into Little League: “The *primary purpose* is to *build retail traffic*.”⁴²

Through such advertising campaigns, these companies were attempting to carve out a niche for themselves in the evolving suburban economy. By appealing to the seemingly pure images of youth and baseball, such firms sought to help parents alleviate the anxieties

brought about by the rise of a consumption-based society and acclimate such individuals to the postwar consumer culture. Little League for parents, like the above-mentioned postwar television programs, “evoked the experiences of the past to lend legitimacy to the dominant ideology of the present.” As contemporary marketing expert and motivational specialist Ernest Dicter noted, acceptance of greater consumption could be encouraged among Americans by identifying new products and styles of consumption with traditional, historically sanctioned behavior and practices. What could be more of a traditional, historically sanctioned practice than youth baseball? Youth baseball was, according to one observer, “as American as corn on the cob and beef on rye, beans in Boston and pumpkin pie.” The world of Little League (including its fields, uniforms, and publications) thus became a place where postwar corporations could safely familiarize themselves to suburban consumers.⁴³

Little League officials did little to discourage such forms of commercialism, as they realized that the rise of this consumer culture, much like the ascent of the corporate world of work, was inevitable. Within this consumption-based society, however, leaders of youth baseball saw Little League as something of a cultural mediator, allowing children to be exposed to consumption in a safe, controlled environment. On the most material level, both Little League and its corporate sponsors saw it as their mission to teach young people how to consume responsibly and how to take care of their purchases. U.S. Rubber, in conjunction with Little League, periodically issued “Teaching Techniques and Training Aids” bulletins for Little League managers, coaches, and players. A 1951 edition taught young players how to care for their baseball equipment effectively. For catcher’s equipment, for example, one could always get new straps and buckles for shin guards and chest protectors, so one should not be quick to throw out used equipment and fall into the trap of overconsumption. A 1954 Little League-sponsored book repeated many of these lessons and even devoted an entire chapter to the “Care of Equipment,” illustrating how young people could become conscientious consumers. However, both publications were also notable for whom they advised young players to consult with questions regarding baseball products. Rather than turning to their parents or other adults, those publications advised youngsters to check with their local sporting goods dealer to see what could be reconditioned and what needed to be replaced, thus strengthening the bond between the child and the consumer economy.⁴⁴

Little League was seen as providing a firewall against the excesses of this consumer culture. While children must be responsibly introduced to a consumption-based society, this introduction must not lead to overconsumption or other “hazards of affluence.” “As a nation,” Little League president Peter McGovern explained, “we are suffering the consequences of too many comforts and complacencies”—a problem seen as endemic amongst the youth of America. Perhaps even more troubling were the types of cultural products that such young people were consuming, or overconsuming, as individuals like McGovern believed. On the movie screen, *The Wild Ones* (1953), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955)—films showing middle-class white youth gone wrong—seemed to celebrate the very idleness and lack of supervision that was seen by postwar experts as leading to juvenile delinquency. Within the world of the printed page, parents recoiled in horror when a connection between crime comic books and juvenile delin-

quency was exposed by Dr. Fredric Wertham in his best-selling *Seduction of the Innocent* (1953). The conclusion reached by Dr. Wertham and other authorities was that the overconsumption of such cultural products was negatively affecting the behavior of the nation’s children. Little League, however, was seen as a counter to overconsumption, a mediating force in the face of detrimental cultural products and the idleness they seemed to breed and venerate. By providing children with a form of physical activity (as opposed to the passive act of watching a movie or reading a comic book), Little League made sure that young people would not be overwhelmed by the comforts and complacencies of consumer culture.⁴⁵

A number of entertainment industries realized the mediating power of Little League and began to use images of youth baseball not only to attract viewers but also to illustrate that their cultural products were indeed safe for children, thus making the consumption of those products acceptable to parents and other watchdogs. CBS Television, for example, set one episode of its weekly program “Let’s Take a Trip,” a show designed by the network’s Public Affairs department “to make the real world in which we live exciting and comprehensible to children,” on a Little League field. On May 29, 1955, the child hosts of the program (“Pud” Flanagan, an eleven-year-old boy, and Ginger MacManus, a nine-year-old girl) took a trip to Roslyn, New York, to meet Edward Steitz, a regional Little League director. Mr. Steitz not only showed the two children batting and catching techniques but also informed the program’s viewers how Little League was helping to combat juvenile delinquency across the country. In October of 1959, Walt Disney chose the two-part television movie “A Diamond Is a Boy’s Best Friend” to lead off the new season of his “Walt Disney Presents.” The fact that Disney would choose a movie about Little League to start his new season attests to the popularity of the sport as there was little doubt that a film about youth baseball would attract viewers. What was equally important, however, were the values embodied through Little League that Disney’s production stressed. “A Diamond Is a Boy’s Best Friend” told the tale of an average American boy who helped push his Little League team into the national tournament. By highlighting the hard, physical work and perseverance needed to capture the Little League championship, Disney’s movie countered the view that popular culture celebrated overconsumption and idleness. Little League was thereby used to show how its programs could instill positive values among its viewers. For parents coming to terms with the rise of television among the nation’s youth, that conclusion was quite comforting.⁴⁶

Brotherhood through Baseball: “The Little League Way,” Postwar Political Economy, and the Dilemmas of Race, Gender, and Authenticity

In the summer of 1959, Vice President Richard M. Nixon exchanged heated words with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the American National Exhibition in Moscow. In what would become known as the “kitchen debate,” Nixon, while standing in front of a mock suburban home filled with the latest high-tech appliances, argued that the most recent in domestic consumerism symbolized the basic ideals of the American way of life. For the vice president, American predominance rested on the image of the suburban home, complete with modern appliances and distinct gender roles for family members. Nixon

announced that this “model” home, with a male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker, adorned with a wide array of consumer goods, represented the essence of American freedom. “Nixon,” concludes historian Elaine Tyler May, “insisted that American superiority in the Cold War rested not on weapons, but on the secure, abundant family life of modern suburban homes.” In the face of this affluence, differences of class, race, ethnicity, and even political ideology no longer mattered; the world of suburban prosperity was open to all.⁴⁷

Yet Nixon was not the only individual to put forward such ideas. In many ways, his comments merely reflected President Dwight Eisenhower’s conception of a “middle way” in politics, “an attempt to resolve what he saw as the contradictions of modern capitalism and to create a harmonious corporate society without class conflict, unbridled acquisitiveness, and contentious party politics”—a notion that was itself a continuation of the corporate liberalism that emerged during the latter years of the New Deal and flourished during World War II. Both labor and management reached similar conclusions in the postwar era, as did many of the nation’s intellectuals. By the mid 1950s many social scientists (including Daniel Bell, Edward Shils, and Seymour Martin Lipset) had reached the conclusion that ideology was dead in the United States and that the traditional issues separating the Left from the Right had declined almost to insignificance in light of the affluence attained by the corporate world. Finally, historians of the “consensus” school dismissed the notion of heritage conflict and stressed that the country’s true legacy rested on pragmatism and economic growth.⁴⁸

The three areas covered in this paper—evolving gender roles, the rise of the corporate work world, and the continued growth of a consumption-based society—all came together to form the basis of consensus liberalism in the postwar political economy. In many ways, therefore, the ideological work that Little League has been shown throughout this paper to perform culminated in the large-scale legitimation of postwar consensus liberalism. Yet Little League did more than simply legitimate this liberal order; it came to symbolize how the postwar political economy of consensus liberalism was supposed to work. In the immediate postwar era, this conception of political economy was still quite new, and many Americans were unsure of how it should look and function. Particularly in light of the rise of extremist ideology and bitter class conflict during the Great Depression and the spread of totalitarianism across Europe during World War II, there was much anxiety as to how any type of “consensus” could ever be reached. Within this climate of apprehension, Little League, “one subject on which Republicans and Democrats do agree” according to one corporate backer of youth baseball, came to represent how this system of corporate liberalism was supposed to operate. On the Little League field, the ideals of consensus, equality, and fairness were put on display for all the world to see, as youth baseball became a symbol that many liberals used not only to further the domestic hegemony of corporate liberalism but also as a valuable tool in the Cold War struggle against Communism.⁴⁹

On one level, Little League came to symbolize the overarching fairness of the postwar political economy. The Little League field was a place of impartiality and equality, a place where anyone could prove their ability and inevitably succeed. “The Little League way,” according to a manager in a fictional account of Little League, was based upon a firm belief in “[f]air and open tryouts.” Ideally, anyone had a chance to excel once given a fair

tryout, no matter what kind of shape one was in (possibly another reason why Little League proved much more popular in the postwar era than such physically demanding sports as football and boxing). As the authors of a how-to guidebook for potential Little Leaguers put it: “No matter how big or small you are, or how you may be handicapped physically, baseball has a place for you. You’ll find the short and the fat and the tall and the skinny and the player of average size.”⁵⁰

More specifically, Little League was also seen as providing an arena where notions of ethnicity, religion, and race no longer mattered; all individuals were judged solely on their talents. Little League literature is full of examples of Poles playing alongside Italians, and leagues cosponsored by various religious organizations (in one case, the league was organized by the local Protestant church, a Catholic youth organization oversaw the try-outs, and the uniforms were donated by B’nai Brith). In the realm of race, Little League officials and their supporters were quick to highlight cases where youth baseball broke down racial prejudice and segregation. This was the case in Harlingen, Texas, where African-American youngsters were allowed to prove themselves on the Little League field, giving them the opportunity to earn the grudging respect of many of the town’s white citizens. And the world’s political leaders took notice of this power of Little League. Commenting in 1953 on such occurrences, Carlos P. Romolo, president of the United Nations, found that “brotherhood through baseball is a fact worth underlining as one of the living realities of our time. . . . Men of different nations, races, faiths and economic and social backgrounds are, through baseball, brought together in this country in a spirit of cooperation and teamwork.”⁵¹

Perhaps most importantly, Little League baseball helped show how class distinctions could be overcome in the postwar order. Little League baseball, in the words of one corporate leader, “equalized” class distinctions, allowing an individual to “lose his memory of social and financial and political rank.” Men and women from the ranks of both management and labor could sit side-by-side at a Little League game and come to a mutual interest through the players on the field. Or as one Little League publication put it: “We find a business executive sitting next to the mechanic he employs [*sic*], but both with a common interest—their sons on the diamond. This is constructive. Persons who would seldom, if ever, meet, are drawn together and the result is the pure Americanism we preach, but too rarely practice.” Through Little League, the “middle way” could be found, class conflict could be overcome, and ideology could finally be relegated to the dustbin of history.⁵²

Once Little League came to symbolize this particular brand of postwar American democracy, it became a useful tool in the arsenal of many Cold Warriors. American and global political leaders, armed forces officers, Little League officials, and even Little League parents all began to see Little League as a powerful tool in the global struggle against communism and totalitarianism. As UN President Romolo noted, Little League is a “sort of United Nations in miniature, advancing the cause of democracy in greater freedom.” In the immediate postwar era, Little League baseball was seen as being able to help bring democracy to postwar Europe and Asia by introducing youngsters to distinctly American values. An army officer who helped bring Little League to Italy noted that “baseball in Italy has made tremendous strides since the end of the war. . . . Some of us felt that Little

League, with all of its fine attributes might not only ultimately improve the quality of Italian ball players but instill some good American principles in the boys at an early age.” On the Pacific Front, the Army Signal Corps converted the sound track of a popular Little League promotional featurette from English to Japanese and distributed the film throughout Japan in 1950 as a component of Douglas MacArthur’s plan to westernize postwar Japanese culture.⁵³

Little League was also enlisted to help stem the spread of Communism in the postwar era. In many countries, with the support of the State Department and the armed forces, Little Leagues were established to battle the Red menace. For example, when Little League was introduced to South Korea in 1951, one Captain Hutchins explained that “we’ve introduced the game to teach the American way of life and to help cement American-Korean relations.”⁵⁴ For many Cold Warriors, Little League not only targeted those most susceptible to Communist rhetoric (the impressionable young), but it also countered the anti-Western discourse often spread by Communist agents by providing a concrete example of American equality and democracy. As army Lieutenant Steve Morales explained at the height of the Cold War:

It’s pretty hard to sell propaganda that America is a class-conscious, imperialistic country when they can see democracy in action in baseball. They find out that in our setup, a sergeant may be the chairman of the board of directors of a Little League with colonels, and even generals, serving under him. It’s difficult to make them believe we have a caste system when they see a colonel’s son playing alongside of the kid of a sergeant.⁵⁵

Little League also came to symbolize U.S. Cold War superiority and affluence on the home front as well. After the first foreign team (Canada) played in a World Series in 1952, teams from the United States continually beat squads from other countries for much of the decade, a fact that seemed to illustrate thoroughly U.S. preeminence. When Fort Worth, Texas, beat Monterrey, Mexico, in the 1960 tournament, for example, the American press reported that the Mexican boys were reduced to tears for half an hour after the game. “We should have never left Monterrey,” said the manager of the Mexican squad. Yet even when foreign teams won, as Mexico did in 1957 and 1958, the United States was still portrayed in the more positive light. Commenting on the poverty of the Mexican players, one observer found that “they were amazed at the plentiful supply of milk, often drank more at one sitting than their families back home could afford in a week.” Given five dollars to spend, the team headed to a department store. When they learned the clothes were complimentary, they formed a huddle and gave a rousing “Viva” for the store. Taken to Ebbets Field for their first Major League Baseball game, the Mexican players were reportedly more interested in “eating hot dogs than in watching the game.” They had never, according to the American press, seen such leisure and prosperity, as many of them had dropped out of school in order to help supplement their family’s meager income. Both the press and Little League officials downplayed the final score of the World Series and instead highlighted how impressed the Mexican boys were with the bounty and security of U.S. culture. Regardless of the results on the field, Little League could serve as an arena through which to remind the rest of the world—as well as many Americans—of the perceived superiority of the American way of life.⁵⁶

Throughout the postwar era, political leaders of this liberal order realized these powers of Little League and celebrated youth baseball’s role in securing this new political economy. In 1959, for example, a presidential proclamation by President Eisenhower designated the week beginning on the second Monday in June as National Little League Week throughout the United States, a proclamation that President John Kennedy continued throughout his presidency. In fact, with the inauguration of the Kennedy administration, Little League officials saw themselves as greatly contributing to the ascendancy of postwar liberalism. Commenting on the Kennedy administration’s “Accent on Youth,” Little League President Peter McGovern asserted that the “vigor and vitality” of youth baseball had rubbed off on the youthful “Whiz Kids” of the new administration. To McGovern, it was “[r]eassuring to know as administrations change that [the] country is sound economically, productivity [*sic*], financially.” And there was little doubt among Little League officials and postwar political leaders that youth baseball had played a vital role in the creation. On July 16, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson gave Little League its greatest badge of recognition by signing Public Law 88-378, which granted Little League a Congressional Charter of Federal Incorporation. This certificate of charter charged Little League with responsibilities beyond simply teaching boys how to play baseball. “Using the disciplines of the native American game of baseball,” the charter read, Little League baseball was seen as being able “[t]o help and voluntarily assist boys in developing qualities of citizenship, sportsmanship, and manhood.” As this charter demonstrates, the worlds of postwar liberalism and Little League baseball were inextricably entwined.⁵⁷

Yet if Little League allows one to see the impact of postwar liberalism, it also helps illustrate the cracks that began to develop in this liberal consensus. As has been shown, a certain amount of tension was always present in the legitimation process that Little League undertook during the postwar era, as advocates of youth baseball tried to strike a balance between the desire for individualism and the perceived need to prepare young men for the burgeoning corporate world. Yet new sources of tension began to develop by the mid 1950s, this time among groups left out of the postwar liberal order: African Americans and women. In 1955, white Little League officials in St. Petersburg, Florida, dropped out of the national organization to form a new league, one that did not allow black players. In the same year, South Carolina dropped out of the league over the selection of an African-American team for tournament playoffs but continued to carry on its local activity without national franchise. While Little League officials denounced racism and segregation, they did not get involved on the regional level, as they maintained that it was not their business to attempt to change local customs. Many black Little Leaguers were further angered when national league officials did not allow the African-American team from South Carolina to participate in the 1955 World Series, as the white teams’ decision to drop out of state tournament play invalidated any entry from the state. Women also began to question the fairness of Little League, claiming that any activity that barred girls from competing was sexist and exclusionary. While numerous boys were allowed to benefit from the program of Little League, one feminist critic of youth baseball noted in 1958, “[T]here is not a crumb for his sisters.” After a long and bitter struggle, girls were finally allowed to participate in Little League programs in 1974.⁵⁸

More generally, critics of Little League began to see organized youth baseball as an inauthentic experience, a program that created “battalions of anonymous boys” who had given up the “child’s world of spontaneity and genuine responses” for a sport that “is artificially imposed and stupidly stylized.” Such voices maintained that experiences like Little League had turned young people into mere pawns in the corporate order. By the mid 1960s, a new spirit of youth had swept through the nation, challenging the world-view that supporters of Little League had worked so hard to maintain. American culture in general—and Little League baseball more specifically—would never be the same again.⁵⁹



¹Arthur Daley and Margaret W. Baldwin, “Small Fry at Bat,” *The Reader’s Digest*, August 1950, p. 39; Lance Van Auken and Robin Van Auken, *Play Ball! The History of Little League Baseball* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

²Harry T. Paxton, “Small Boy’s Dream Come True,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 14 May 1949, pp. 27, 139.

³Paxton, “Small Boy’s Dream Come True,” p. 27 [FIRST QUOTATION]; “Facts for Little League to Use,” 1 December 1958, LLM-120 collection, box 3, Little League Archives, Williamsport, Pennsylvania; Little League Media Packet, January 2000, p. 45, in author’s possession; Arthur Daley, “30,000 Little Big Leaguers,” *American*, April 1951, p. 136 [SECOND QUOTATION].

⁴“The Leisured Masses,” *Business Week*, 12 September 1953, pp. 142, 145; letter from Charles J. Durban, reprinted in Little League Press Book, March 1951, LLM-102 collection, box 7, Little League Archives [QUOTATION]. For the postwar era as an intense period of anxiety and uncertainty, see Warren Susman, with the assistance of Edward Griffin, “Did Success Spoil the United States?” in *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War*, ed. Larry May (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 19-57; and William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991). For the importance of children in the postwar order and the threat of juvenile delinquency to this order, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, BasicBooks, 1988); and James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁵Peter McGovern quoted in Whitney Martin and John McCallum, *How You Can Play Little League Baseball* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), vii.

⁶Pierre Bourdieu, “How Can One Be a Sports Fan?” in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge Press, 1993), 339-356, 340 [QUOTATION].

⁷To date, there has been no authoritative scholarly work done on the history of Little League baseball. There have been a number of popular histories of Little League, and scholars such as Gary Alan Fine have approached the sport from a more sociological perspective. Jack W. Berryman has perhaps provided the most cogent reading of Little League, but his work on youth sports briefly touches upon the Little League phenomenon. See Berryman’s “From the Cradle to the Playing Field: America’s Emphasis on Highly Organized Competitive Sports for Preadolescent Boys,” *Journal of Sport History* 2 (1975): 112-131 for his understanding of the spread of Little League. For more popular histories of the sport, see Van Auken and Van Auken’s *Play Ball!*; and Carl E. Stotz’s *A Promise Kept: The Story of the Founding of Little League Baseball* (Jersey Shore, Pa.: Zebrowski Historical Publishing Co., 1992). For a more sociological examination of Little League, see Fine’s *With the Boys: Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁸Mark Dyreson, “The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American Sport in the 1920s,” *Journal of Sport History* 16 (1989): 261-281; Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

⁹Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11. For a decidedly urban take on the rise of modern sport in America, see Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time:*

New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Stephen Hardy, *How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation, and Community, 1865-1915* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982); and Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004). Mintz provides one statistic that is particularly telling of the growing economic power of children in the postwar era: Toy sales rose from \$84 million in 1940 to \$1.25 billion by 1960. For more on the consumer power of postwar children, see Catherine Reef, *Childhood in America: An Eyewitness History* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2002).

¹⁰“FBI Compliments Sponsor,” *Little League Hits!* Press Relations Office publication, August 1952, p. 3, “Little League World Series 1951-1952” box, Little League Archives.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Hoover’s findings on juvenile delinquency quoted in Peter J. McGovern, “Little League Holds Promise of America’s Tomorrow,” *Little League Official Program 1956*, p. 11, LLM-102 collection, box 10, Little League Archives.

¹³Benjamin Karpman quoted in George Chauncey, Jr., “The Postwar Sex Crime Panic,” in *True Stories from the American Past*, ed. William Graebner (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993), 172. Chauncey’s essay also discusses more broadly the way that the discourse surrounding juvenile delinquency was shaped and used in the postwar era.

¹⁴Peter McGovern quoted in Martin and McCallum, *How You Can Play Little League Baseball*, vii-viii. Hoover quoted in Little League foundation mailing, 1959, unmarked filing cabinet, “Foundation” folder, Little League Archives; “Parent’s Comment,” *Little League Hits!* August 1952, p. 2, “Little League World Series 1951-1952” box, Little League Archives. For the ways that the discourse on juvenile delinquency was used to symbolize the fears of the postwar era, see Mike Czaplicki’s “Criminalizing Change: Community Transition and the Strategic Use of Delinquency in Chicago, 1946-1968,” unpublished paper, March, 2000, in possession of author. Not surprisingly, police departments across the country began to see Little League as a means to combat juvenile delinquency. In New London, Connecticut, where the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association sponsored the Little League, Patrolman Herbert Moran found that of “the 72 boys who played in the League, not one of those boys got into trouble during the whole season in or out of the League, and we of the association think that Little League ball over the country will help the police all over the nation in one of its most serious problems—the curbing of juvenile delinquency” (letter from Patrolman Herbert Moran, reprinted in *Little League Press Book*, February 1951, p. 7, LLM-102 collection, box 7, Little League Archives).

¹⁵Robert M. Collins, “Growth Liberalism in the Sixties: Great Societies at Home and Grand Designs Abroad,” in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, ed. David Farber (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 11-44; Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992), 24. For more on the rise of the suburbs, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁶Hy Turkin, ed., *The Official Encyclopedia of Little League Baseball* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1954), 20-21 [FIRST QUOTATION]; “Letters to the Editor,” *Look*, 22 September 1953, p. 10 [SECOND QUOTATION]; *Chicago Daily News* quoted in “You Can Take Pride in Little League,” *This is Little League 1958*, p. 3, LLM-102 collection, box 7, Little League Archives.

¹⁷Letter from Peter McGovern to Little League personnel, 28 July 1953, LLM-101 collection, “Little League publications” folder, Little League Archives. For the connection between crime and the need to teach proper gender roles see Chauncey, Jr., “The Postwar Sex Crime Panic,” 160-178.

¹⁸For the newness of these postwar “traditional” gender roles, see May’s *Homeward Bound* and Coontz’s *The Way We Never Were*.

¹⁹May, *Homeward Bound*, 3 [QUOTATION], 135-136.

²⁰Bob Feller with Hal Lebovitz, “Don’t Knock Little League,” *Collier’s*, 3 August 1956, p. 81.

²¹“Long Island Women in Little League,” *Little Leaguer*, May 1953, p. 9; West Valley Little League, “Batting 1.000 in the Kitchen,” LLM-120 collection, box 5, Little League Archives; “A Woman’s Place is on the Field,” *Little Leaguer*, August 1953, p. 15. Yet the presence of this feminine influence within Little

League created much tension, as too much was seen as leading to “Momism,” an affliction seen as creating weak and passive children. “60,000 Little League Managers,” announced a Philadelphia newspaper in 1958, “Have the Same Problem: Mother.” See “60,000 Little League Managers Have the Same Problem: Mother,” *Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin*, 27 July 1958. For more on “Momism” and how it was viewed by contemporary observers in the postwar era, see Philip Wylie’s *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1942).

²²George Lipsitz, *Class and Culture in Cold War America: “A Rainbow at Midnight”* (South Hadley, Mass.: J.F. Bergin Publishers, Inc., 1981), 7-8.

²³*Ibid.*, 8; Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 186; David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1950), 14-15, 19; Susman, *Culture as History*, 280.

²⁴H.E. Humphreys, “Why I Like Little League,” speech before the Joint Service Clubs, Williamsport, Pennsylvania, 26 August 1954, LLM-120 collection, box 4, Little League Archives [FIRST QUOTATION]; Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 270 [SECOND QUOTATION].

²⁵Daley, “30,000 Little Big Leaguers,” p. 136.

²⁶“Canton Builds a Park at Night,” *Little Leaguer*, May 1953, p. 10 [FIRST QUOTATION]; “Operation Ball Park,” *Little Leaguer*, February 1955, p. 14 [SECOND QUOTATION] (Statistics for growth of Little League fields also found in this source); Joseph Olgin, *Little League Champions* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1954), 20.

²⁷Daley, “30,000 Little Big Leaguers,” p. 134.

²⁸May, *Homeward Bound*, 149.

²⁹E. C. Quinn, “Industry Salutes,” *Little Leaguer*, February 1955, p. 3 [FIRST QUOTATION]; Milton S. Eisenhower, “Tomorrow’s Leaders,” *Little Leaguer*, May 1953, p. 4 [SECOND AND THIRD QUOTATIONS].

³⁰Gelber, *Hobbies*, 6; May, *Homeward Bound*, 28.

³¹Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 85.

³²Bob Turley quoted in “Little League Alumnus,” *Little League World Series Official Program 1956*, p. 44, LLM-102 collection, box 10, Little League Archives; “Little Leaguers Climb Ladder,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 May 1958, clipping, Little League Archives; Oliver Brothers advertisement, *Little League World Series Official Program 1953*, LLM-102 collection, box 10, Little League Archives.

³³Bob Feller with Hal Lebowitz, “Don’t Knock Little League,” *Collier’s*, 3 August 1956: 78-81, 80 [FIRST QUOTATION]; Phyllis Cerf, “A Mother’s Viewpoint,” *Little Leaguer*, June 1954, p. 18 [SECOND QUOTATION]; “The Little League,” *Life*, 28 June 1954, p. 107 [THIRD QUOTATION]; “Kid’s World Series,” *Life*, 11 September 1950, p. 117 [FOURTH QUOTATION]; William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), 46; “Adults Could Take a Leaf From Little Leaguers’ Book,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 29 August 1960, clipping, Little League Archives.

³⁴“Did You Know?” General Electric advertisement, *Little Leaguer*, August 1954; “Let’s Give a BIG Cheer for the Little League,” General Motors advertisement, *Little Leaguer*, June 1954; E.C. Quinn, “Industry Salutes,” *Little Leaguer*, February 1955, p. 3. While it is difficult to ascertain the effect of such advertisements on Little Leaguers, Martin Ralbovsky, in his work *Destiny’s Darlings*, documents one youngster who played on a team sponsored by General Electric who went on to spend much of his adult life working for G.E. See *Destiny’s Darlings: A World Championship Little League Twenty Years Later* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1974), 217-218.

³⁵Martin and McCallum, *How You Can Play Little League Baseball*, 8-9; “Industry Salutes Young America,” *Little Leaguer*, July 1954, p. 5; letters to the Editor, *Look*, 22 September 1952, p. 10.

³⁶Turkin, ed., *The Official Encyclopedia of Little League Baseball*, 10; Charles Durban quoted in United States Rubber Company, *58th Annual Report*, 1949, pp. 19-20; letter from Peter McGovern to Mr. Ulrich, 20 January 1954, LLM-120 collection, box 4, Little League Archives. For more general works on

advertising in twentieth-century America, see Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Cynthia Lee Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a Better America, 1939-1959* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006).

³⁷Collins, “Growth Liberalism in the Sixties,” 12-13; United States Rubber Company, *69th Annual Report*, 1960, p. 18; Jackson Lears, “A Matter of Taste: Corporate Cultural Hegemony in a Mass-Consumption Society,” in *Recasting America*, 38-57, 47 [QUOTATION].

³⁸George Lipsitz, “The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class, and Ethnicity in Early Network Television Programs,” *Camera Obscura* 16 (1988): 79-116.

³⁹“Play Ball Like a Big-Leaguer,” Rawlings Sporting Goods advertisement, *Little Leaguer*, March 1955; “Make Spalding Your Little League Headquarters,” Spalding Sporting Goods advertisement, *Little Leaguer*, June 1954 [QUOTATION]; Johnson&Johnson advertisement, *Little League Official Program 1955*, LLM-102 collection, box 10, Little League Archives; *Little League Rules 1953*, “Little League World Series 1953” box, Little League Archives; *1955 Little League Rules*, “Little League World Series 1955” box, Little League Archives; *Official Rules, Little League Baseball 1957*, “Little League World Series 1957” box, Little League Archives; “This is Little League Edition,” *Little Leaguer*, December 1954, front cover.

⁴⁰William T. Lai, *Championship Baseball: From Little League to Big League* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954), 206-207; “Facts for Little League to Use,” 1 December 1958, LLM-120 collection, box 3, Little League Archives; news release, Little League Baseball, “Foundation, 1960-1961” folder, Little League Archives.

⁴¹“The Forward Look . . . A Hit in Any League,” Chrysler Corporation advertisement, *Little Leaguer*, April 1955.

⁴²“Little League Draws Kids and Sponsors Alike,” *Business Week*, 23 August 1952, pp. 47-48; “Little League Sponsorship Helps to Develop Better Kids,” *The Esso Dealer*, April 1958; “Little League Baseball: A Family Affair,” *The First Federal Saver*, July 1958; “‘Little League’ King,” *Sinclair Dealer News*, December 1948; “Mr. Commissioner,” *The Prudential Bulletin*, December 1951; “Little League: Diamonds in the Rough,” *Oldsmobile Rocket Circle*, June 1957; Motorola Bulletin to all Motorola distributors, 20 February 1957, “Little League Worlds Series 1957” box, all found in Little League Archives.

⁴³On the importance of Earnest Dicter, see Lipsitz, “The Meaning of Memory,” 80-81, 85; Lipsitz, “The Meaning of Memory,” 85 [FIRST QUOTATION]; Theodore R. McKeldin, “Governor’s Proclamation,” 14 June 1957, LLM-120 collection, box 4, Little League Archives [SECOND QUOTATION].

⁴⁴“Bulletin #4: Teaching Techniques and Training Aids for Little League baseball players,” LLM-120 collection, box 2, Little League Archives; Martin and McCallum, *How You Can Play Little League Baseball*, 141.

⁴⁵Peter McGovern, “Little League’s Next Twenty Years,” opening address at regional conferences, March 1959, LLM-120 collection, box 2, Little League Archives; Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987); 31-44. “There is nothing in these ‘juvenile delinquencies,’” wrote Wertham, “that is not described or told about in comic books. These [crimes being committed by young people] are comic-book plots.” Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1953), 155.

⁴⁶“‘Let’s Take a Trip’ to Little League Baseball Headquarters May 29,” Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) Press Release, 20 May 1955, “Little League World Series 1955” box, Little League Archives; “Little League Disney Premiere,” *Little Leaguer*, September 1959, p. 1. The relationship between Little League and Disney was reciprocal, as Little League officials often used Disney characters to promote their sport. In their 1955 World Series program, for example, Little League ran a page titled, “Davy Crockett, Little League Fan,” that showed actor Fess Parker posing with two Little Leaguers in Sherman Oaks, California. See “Davy Crockett, Little League Fan,” *Little League World Series Official Program 1955*, p. 52, LLM-102 collection, box 10, Little League Archives. See Susman, “Did Success Spoil the United States?” 31-32.

⁴⁷May, *Homeward Bound*, 17-18.

⁴⁸Robert Griffith, "Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Corporate Commonwealth," *American Historical Review* 87 (1982): 87-122, 88 [QUOTATION]. For the rise of corporate liberalism, see Alan Brinkley's *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). See Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991) for an account of labor's acceptance of a consumption-based economy and George Lipsitz's *Class and Culture in Cold War America*, particularly page 118, for business's search for a less antagonistic approach to bargaining. For an example of the "end of ideology" argument, see Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Future* (New York: The Free Press, 1960). For more on the consensus historians, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 320-360.

⁴⁹"Little League Draws Kids and Sponsors Alike," *Business Week*, 23 August 1952, p. 48.

⁵⁰Curtis Bishop, *The Little League Way* (Austin, Tex.: The Steck Company, 1957); Martin and McCallum, *How You Can Play Little League Baseball*, 5-6. The democratic ideals of Little League rhetoric in which everyone has an equal opportunity to play did not always match reality on the playing field, particularly when winning became important. The short, the fat, the uncoordinated sat the bench and saw little playing time.

⁵¹Turkin, ed., *The Official Encyclopedia of Little League Baseball*, 102; "It Happened in Harlingen," *The Christian Century*, 10 February 1954, pp. 175-176; Carlos P. Romolo, "Brotherhood through Baseball," *Little Leaguer*, June 1953, p. 3.

⁵²A.G. Spalding, "Baseball—A Man Maker," *Little Leaguer*, February 1955, p. 42; *Little League Press Book*, February 1951, pp. 4-5, LLM-102 collection, box 7, Little League Archives. As Spalding had died in 1915, the Spalding article is obviously a reprint of an article he had written earlier, though no date is provided for the original publication date.

⁵³Romolo, "Brotherhood," p. 3; letters to the Editor, *Little Leaguer*, June 1955, p. 1; Van Auken and Van Auken, *Play Ball!* 77.

⁵⁴Captain Hutchins quoted in "Korea's First Little League," *Little Leaguer*, August 1953, p. 20. For a narrative of Little League in South Korea, see Harvey Frommer, *Growing Up At Bat: 50 Years of Little League Baseball* (New York: Pharos Books, 1989), 30.

⁵⁵Steve Morales quoted in Van Auken and Van Auken, *Play Ball!* 166.

⁵⁶"Wake Up, Wake Up," *Newsweek*, 5 September 1960, p. 69 [FIRST QUOTATION]; "A Dream Trip for Tiny Heroes," *Life*, 9 September 1957, p. 118 [OTHER QUOTATIONS].

⁵⁷Dwight D. Eisenhower, "National Little League Baseball Week: A Proclamation," 1959, "Senate and House Reports" folder, unmarked filing cabinet, Little League Archives; John F. Kennedy, "National Little League Baseball Week: A Proclamation," 1961, LLM-103 collection, box 3, Little League Archives; Peter McGovern, "Headquarters Newsletter to Presidents of Local Leagues," 15 August 1960, LLM-120 collection, box 3, Little League Archives; Congressional Charter of Federal Incorporation quoted in Van Auken and Van Auken, *Play Ball!* 155.

⁵⁸"Memorandum on St. Petersburg," 21 December 1955, folder 7, box 42, Branch Rickey Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Rudeen, "The Little League, Part II," *Sports Illustrated*, 26 August 1957, pp. 54-59; Gene Sapakoff, "Little League's Civil War," *Sports Illustrated*, 30 October 1995, no page number; Lorraine Lehan Hopkins, "The Little Leagues," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1958, 84-85, 85 [QUOTATION].

⁵⁹Hopkins, "The Little Leagues," 84, 85. See "Little League Baseball Criticized," *Pediatric Herald*, April 1960, p. 6 for another critique of Little League baseball along similar lines. As noted in the introduction of this paper, this essay does not provide an in-depth examination of these post-1960s struggles. A thorough investigation of such issues is beyond the purview of this essay and will be left to other historians, who will undoubtedly have to look beyond the materials collected in the Little League Archives and find sources that speak to local teams and conditions.