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ON ISSUE

FROM JOE CAMEL TO HIP, FIT GIRLS!

C.L. Cole

Daniel Thomas Cook

One year before America's celebrated 1997 tobacco settlement (only 1 year later, the settlement was amended and weakened), U.S. Women's Soccer, the National Cancer Institute, the Centers for Disease Control, and the U.S. Surgeon General formed the U.S.-based SmokeFree Soccer program. Donna Shalala, then secretary of health and human services, launched the antismoking campaign in Atlanta, Georgia, the host city of the 1996 Olympics. Indeed, SmokeFree entered at least two cultural spaces that fetishized citizenship and traded on affect: the Olympic Games and a national campaign, most formally signified by America's war on Joe Camel, to prevent youth smoking.

Invoking the overused but nonetheless affective imagery of athleticism, nation, and teamwork, Shalala (1996) announced that "preventing tobacco use among young people [will] take the stamina of Carla Overbeck and the precision of Tammy Pearman. But, most of all, it [will] take that winning combination that underscores every great athletic effort—good old-fashioned American teamwork." Shalala's American team included parents, the sports industry, the media, coaches, state and community leaders, and other caring adults. America's (read: caring adults who are the source of protection) opponent? The accused: R.J. Reynolds' cartoon mascot Joe Camel. Shalala coded the renowned penis figure (imagery that, particularly in a moment defined by national fascination with child sexual abuse narratives, Kincaid, 1998, suggests that the Joe Camel preoccupation is linked to a complex sexual field) as a predator responsible for what she names (clearly in an effort to underscore its seriousness) a "pediatric disease."

SmokeFree's explicit aim is to prevent teen smoking by educating youth about tobacco-related diseases. The coordinated effort's print and visual materials feature members of the U.S. women's soccer team who advise adolescent girls of "the real score." In what is meant to be a clever translation, girls are told, "In the game of health, always avoid the penalty of smoking—and go straight for the goal of fitness" (see www.smokefree.gov). The antismoking message featured on SmokeFree's home page suggests the allure and permeability of the protective narrative as it moves from sport to smoking to obesity:

According to the CDC [Centers for Disease Control], children involved in physically active sports like soccer can significantly reduce their risk of smoking. In addition, participation by children on a youth soccer team can help provide the type of physical activity essential to long-term health. Indeed, American youth have become increasingly unfit and overweight. The percentage of young people who are overweight has doubled since 1980. Participation in a developmentally appropriate sport like soccer can contribute to national efforts to reduce the current epidemic of childhood obesity. (www.smokefree.gov)

The Public Broadcasting Service encouraged SmokeFree's efforts by funding *Soccer . . . Kickin' Butts*, a documentary billed as an insightful examination of the "physical and psychological benefits of playing soccer as part of a healthy, smoke-free lifestyle, including weight management, stress relief and building life long friendships" (www.smokefree.gov). *Soccer . . . Kickin' Butts* (which features U.S. soccer stars Shannon MacMillan, Tiffeny Milbrett, Lorrie Fair, and Danielle Slaton) shows how soccer is, Shalala claims, "the perfect antidote to teen smoking."

In the video, teen soccer players representing different locales in the United States testify to the promises routinely made in the name of sport. Cultural differences fade as the healthy body, the corporeal specificity long associated with utopic sporting spaces, is foregrounded alongside sporting pleasures, intimacy, moral discipline, and safety. The girls talk, we are told, "with candor and humor about how being involved with soccer has 'kept them out of trouble' and helped them make friends, deal with adversity and develop leadership skills" (www.smokefree.gov). Another now-familiar dynamic (children with adult wisdom) is advanced when Jennifer, a young soccer player from New Hampshire, describes the effects of second-hand smoke and then bears witness to her difficult but necessary confrontation with an adult smoker, her mother.¹ In another instance, the documentary directs attention to two organizations that are attempting to revise soccer's suburban image by bringing it to the inner cities. In *Soccer . . . Kickin' Butts*, the problems appear self-evident, their solutions are clear, and their clarity is only inflected and enhanced, but never simply, by girl soccer players and the story's redundancies.

SmokeFree Soccer builds on and affectively folds the "tobacco war" (Glantz & Balbach, 2000; Pringle, 1998) into lifestyle discourses already in place. In this case, lifestyle politics intersect with the figures of the child-teen and the teen-pediatric. Their authorizations and affect are mutual: girl-teen soccer players shore up the ethical certainty of lifestyle moralizing, and lifestyle politics (which deny America's healthcare hierarchy) clarify the paradigmatic meaning of the girl-teen soccer player national icon. Such a campaign also absorbs "Girl Power!" and Generation Y into an antitobacco imagination populated by fantastic figures. For instance, Roddy Reid (2000), in his analysis of California's antismoking campaigns, showed that smokers are "repeatedly likened . . . to tragically isolated individuals, postmenopausal women or postclimacteric men, shapeless members of the working class, French nationals, the genetically deficient, addicts, serial killers,

gangsters, and in a more humorous vein, farting cows" (p. 136). Donna Shalala deploys this strategy when she participates in the struggle over coolness. By her view, "this generation needs to understand that health and fitness are cool" (www.smokefree.gov).

What are we to make of America's innovative solutions? Eliminate Joe Camel? Redefine cool? Offer girls' sports as the nation's latest antidrug? And, how do these innovative solutions help reconfigure what and who count as the problems? What should we make of the fantastic power accorded to Joe Camel (particularly because, as Mike Males (1999) showed, smoking among youth was actually on the decline during this period)? How is it possible that America imagined a cartoon figure exercising such enormous power over the minds and bodies of America's kids? And what are the stakes in the fight over cool (Pountain and Robins, 2000)? Can the contrived cool of the clean-cut, family-friendly soccer players stand in as the functional equivalent to the seductive rebellion of smoking cool? How does the "girls sport meets Joe Camel" episode help us understand the complexity of the now hypervisible girl athlete icon in contemporary America? More specifically, what can it teach us about the girl athlete icon, infantile citizenship (Berlant, 2001), and the field of sexuality? In sum, what might an analysis of such protective narratives (particularly those that rely on the corporeal specificities associated with sporting utopias) clarify about the adult psyche and politics in the contemporary moment?

NOTE

1. See Cole, Geissler, Giardina, and Metz, (2001) for a discussion of representations of girl athletes who make claims that—it can reasonably be argued—are beyond childhood. Most specifically, the paper considers Nike's celebrated "If you let me play" campaign (in which girls make point-by-point conditional claims about the resolution of some of the health risks associated with being adult women in this culture . . . if girls are allowed to play sports). We argue that the ad campaign, whose appeal is heightened through its biological register reference (working on the body to enhance the control of one's adult life), is also a symptom of the positions that girls' and women's sports now occupy in multiple circuits that link citizenship (an infantile citizenship that plays out adult child-within narcissism) and consumption. Both dimensions, we argue, are embedded in highly consumable, nostalgic, nationalist feminist discourses advancing, to a great extent, through sport-related spaces.

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FOCUS

NOTES ON MIDNIGHT BASKETBALL AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF RECREATION, RACE, AND AT-RISK URBAN YOUTH

Douglas Hartmann

A decade ago, dozens of American cities began to organize late-night basketball leagues for young men in mostly minority, inner-city neighborhoods. These so-called midnight basketball leagues initially enjoyed widespread public support; however, in the mid-1990s, they became the focus of intense controversy and debate. This article offers a grounded, critical overview. Midnight basketball is first described as part of the “social problems industry” that emerged in public recreation provision in the 1990s. The author then suggests that these programs are best understood in the context of contemporary political discourse and public policy regarding at-risk urban youth, and crime, delinquency, and public safety more generally. Midnight basketball’s racial roots and contours become central with respect both to the ideological consensus underlying contemporary American conceptions of crime and risk as well as the multiple and competing visions of cause and intervention. The article concludes by noting the starkly different perceptions of program participants themselves.

In a 1994 report titled “Beyond Fun and Games” (Tindall, 1995), the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) profiled 19 different programs dealing with a wide variety of social problems and public concerns operated by its local affiliates. The NRPA touted this collection of programs—which ranged from disease prevention, substance abuse, and public health to day care, juvenile delinquency, and teenage pregnancy to gangs, drugs, and violence to education and economic revitalization—for “bringing new dimensions to public recreation as human service.” They were among the earliest and most high-profile examples of what Robert Pitter and David Andrews (1997) described as the “social problems industry” that emerged in the world of sport and recreation in the 1990s (see also Schultz, Crompton, & Witt, 1995; Witt & Crompton, 1996). Premised on the remarkable proposition that having young people run around in short pants will have positive affects far beyond the limits of health and physical fitness, this “industry” has witnessed tremendous growth in recent years. Reliable estimates have not yet been generated, but if we consider that in 1997 the journal *Parks and Recreation* identified some 621 programs focused specifically

on reaching “at-risk” youth (Witt & Crompton, 1997a), multiply that by the number of participants these programs served, and then add in the number of participants in comparable formal and informal projects implemented by organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Police Athletic Leagues, schools and community centers, and other such institutions all across the country, the scale and scope of this emerging industry is almost impossible to ignore.

As sport scholars well know, the notion of using athletically based programs to achieve broader social ends has a long history in American culture (Dyreson, 1998; Mrozek, 1983; Riess, 1989). American educational institutions have long justified interscholastic athletic competition and physical education itself as a means of cultivating school spirit, building character and self-discipline among youth and adolescent students, and preventing criminal and delinquent behaviors. The “play movement” of the early 1900s was promoted by progressive reformers who saw the development of parks and recreation programs as a way to socialize, assimilate, and “Americanize” the largely immigrant ethnic working classes moving to U.S. cities (Cavallo, 1981; Pope, 1997). And when President Kennedy launched the President’s Council on Physical Fitness in the 1960s, it was in direct response to the threat of the Soviet expansionism at the height of the cold war (Hoberman, 1984, p. 21). Indeed, given the absence of a genuine “right to sport” movement in the United States and long-standing American Puritan suspicions about leisure in general, the sporting establishment has invariably and almost inevitably been required to justify itself as a means to some larger ends.

Nevertheless, at least two features of these 1990-era programs are historically distinctive. One is their organizational structure and sources of financial support. In contrast to most previous sport and recreation-based social initiatives (which tended to be either publicly supported programs such as those run through public schools or parks and recreation departments or sponsored by private, philanthropic organizations like the YMCA or Scouts), 1990s programs were marked by a great deal of collaboration between and among public and private agencies, organizations, and initiatives—including prominent for-profit private sector organizations such as the Nike Corporation’s Participate in the Lives of American Youth (PLAY) program. Every one of the 19 programs highlighted in the 1994 NRPA report, in fact, was based in some kind of public-private partnership. The second defining feature of these programs is their focus on crime reduction, risk and violence prevention, and public safety. Eight NRPA programs listed crime prevention and public safety as their major emphasis, and it was “risk prevention” that researchers have chosen as the focal point of the evaluation the organization planned to conduct to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs (Witt & Crompton, 1997a). For similar purposes, Pitter and Andrews (1997) identified 26 programs in 30 different metropolitan communities that “provide sport activities as a means of reducing crime and promoting public safety” (p. 89).

These characteristics mark this problems-based orientation as unique in the history of American sport and recreation provision and help explain why sport and recreation-based interventions were the subject of so much discussion and debate during the 1994 federal crime bill debates—a development that Chalip and Johnson (1996) claimed marked “the first time the [federal] legislature has seriously considered the possibility that sport could be incorporated into the domestic agenda” (p. 426). But they also endow this emergent social problems industry with social significance far beyond the world of sport, recreation, and physical fitness. Inspired by James’s (1963/1983) famous cautionary question, “What do they know of sport, who only sport know?”¹ I am convinced that if we are to grasp the true meaning and political significance of problems-based athletic initiatives, we must look outside of the athletic realm. We must look, specifically, at the social “problems” these programs are purported to address. In this article, then, I intend to explore what these innovations in athletic programming reveal not just about American sporting policies and practices but, more important, about the problems of at-risk urban youth as conceived and addressed in contemporary political discourse and public policy. I will do this by focusing on the late-night basketball programs that countless cities and municipalities around the country have organized to attract and serve poor inner-city youth and young men of color. These so-called midnight basketball leagues make a good place to introduce, frame, and focus a more general study of problems-based athletic programs because they are easily the most well-known, widely copied, and controversial of all such initiatives.

BASKETBALL AT MIDNIGHT

The midnight basketball concept first came to widespread national attention in the fall of 1989 when the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), with a matching grant of \$50,000 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), organized leagues in two of its notoriously troubled housing communities (Rockwell Gardens and Henry Horner Homes). Even before the leagues had held their first game or even signed up a single player, the Chicago leagues were a public relations coup. The initiative was followed closely in the local media and praised repeatedly on editorial pages. Prominent local leaders—former Bulls coach and NBC commentator Doug Collins among them—were identified as “league owners” (sponsorship came with a \$2,000 price tag), local sports celebrities including the legendary Michael Jordan were signed up to make appearances at games, and the *Sun-Times* agreed to publish league statistics, standings, and schedules in its sports section. Opening night at Malcolm X College was attended by the mayor, HUD secretary and Bush cabinet member Jack Kemp (the former congressman who had made his reputation as a professional football star and defender of President Ronald Reagan’s supply-side economics), and featured a demonstration by the Jesse White tumblers made famous by performing at halftime of Chicago Bulls games. Within weeks, the program was

featured on ABC's *Good Morning America*, one of NBC's NBA television broadcasts, and in dozens of newspaper and magazine stories nationwide.

The CHA borrowed the concept from a man named G. Van Standifer, a retired systems analyst and former town manager of Glenarden, Maryland. Standifer had become convinced that one of the keys to the problems of poor, inner-city young men was the absence of safe, constructive activities during what he believed to be the high crime hours of 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. His solution was to organize a basketball league that would operate in his Washington, D.C.-area community during these high-crime hours. Standifer's basketball-based program was intriguingly simple and inexpensive. It operated only during summer months and had only three core components: first, that the target group was young men between the ages of 17 and 21; second, that no game could begin before 10:00 p.m.; and third, that two uniformed police officers had to be present and visible at each game. As I will discuss below, the program had an eclectic philosophical base and later added a variety of mentoring, tutoring, and advising workshops to its mix. But at its root was the notion that the program provided an alternative to the non-productive or even destructive activities of the street. "The Alternative" mantra, in fact, was selected as the program's official motto. And if the initiative required minimal resources or expertise, its purported impact on crime reduction were massive. With statistics and strong support from local law enforcement officials, Standifer claimed that the program had contributed to a 30% reduction in late-night crime in his community in its first 3 years of operation. The Maryland County corrections chief, for example, told Chicago reporters, "I haven't seen one single one of these basketball players back in my jail" since the program began (Foundation, 1990). Indeed, it was after seeing a story about the program in *The New York Times* and subsequently learning of the drop in crime in Glenarden that Chicago officials resolved to develop a pilot program of their own.

Buoyed by the positive publicity of the Chicago project, Standifer created Midnight Basketball Leagues, Inc., and the organization, which eventually became the National Association of Midnight Basketball, Inc., experienced dramatic growth in the early 1990s, sanctioning some 38 affiliates or "chapters" nationwide (HUD, 1994). Each chapter, according to the parent organization, was a "non-profit, community-based organization adhering to formal training, rules and regulations" based on the original Standifer model outlined above. The association was written up in dozens of stories nationwide and featured on *60 Minutes*, ESPN, ABC's *World News Tonight*, CNN, and a wide variety of other broadcasts. So appealing was the idea that startup grants for late-night basketball leagues were included in Section 520 of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act passed in the final years of the George H. Bush administration, and in the spring of 1991, President Bush designated Standifer and his program one of his official "thousand points of light" (Number 124, to be precise).

Perhaps even more notably, Midnight Basketball, Inc. spawned countless, nonsanctioned variations all across the country. Indeed, Pitter and

Andrews (1997) go so far as to describe midnight basketball as the “catalyst and template” (p. 93) for the sport-based social problems industry itself. It is primarily with this in mind that I have adopted a broad and expansive definition of midnight basketball in the work that follows—a definition that is not restricted solely to officially sanctioned programs but that also includes the wide variety of programs that use the following core principles: basketball; crime prevention orientation; evening hours (not necessarily midnight); target population: young adult, age 16 to 25 minority men; and strong security presence.

Midnight basketball is not a perfect or ideal-typical representative of problems-based athletic initiatives. Quite the contrary, a number of features mark midnight basketball as unique among the variety of sport and recreation programs that can be included under the rubric of “problems based.” For starters, there is the time of day of these programs and the fact that their target population is somewhat older than most sport and recreation-based outreach initiatives. Another distinctive characteristic is their strong security presence and emphasis on discipline and social control. More significant still is the degree to which midnight basketball programs are racialized (and gendered) despite the relentless race-neutral, color-blind rhetoric of its advocates. But what may be midnight basketball’s most distinguishing characteristic is that it has not retained the broad, bipartisan support it enjoyed when it first came to public prominence. That is to say, unlike any other sport and recreation-based outreach initiative midnight basketball has been the focus of a great deal of public discussion and debate, much of its extremely contentious and extremely high profile.

Much of the controversy first emerged in the context of the 1994 federal crime bill. In the context of the legislative process that produced this omnibus \$30 billion bill, midnight basketball became the target of concerted Republican attacks and came to occupy a disproportionate amount of public debate and media coverage in spite of the fact that it constituted little of a fraction of a percentage of the total spending proposed in the bill (about \$50 million at most). As I have shown in an extensive analysis of the racial politics played out in and through this controversy (Hartmann & Wheelock, 2000), more than 30% of national magazine articles on the crime bill made mention of midnight basketball, and dozens of politicians saw fit to discuss the program in congressional hearings on the matter. Such controversies have remained with us, at both national and local levels, ever since. Less than 2 years later, for example, problems surrounding a midnight basketball program in St. Louis, Missouri, were at the core of a scandal that brought down the city’s African American Mayor Freeman Bosley, Jr. (This was one of the first issues Bosley was forced to address in announcing his bid for reelection earlier this year.)

Rather than making midnight basketball an outlier on the problems-based sports program continuum, I am inclined to think that these unique qualities and characteristics make this policy initiative an eminently productive site for studying problems-based sport and recreation initiatives.

Specifically, I believe these features highlight and help us get to the center of core images, ideas, and ideologies built into and swirling around all such sport-based social outreach initiatives, especially with respect to their broader symbolic significance and their functioning in the cultural politics that surround recreation, risk, crime, and violence in contemporary urban America. They also ensure that there are plenty of empirical materials to draw on.

DATA AND METHOD

In spite of midnight basketball's obvious public prominence and political significance, scholarly research on the topic is extremely limited. Besides the various observations offered by Pitter and Andrews (1997), the only sustained scholarly treatment of midnight basketball comes from a dissertation that uses interviews with key political elites and program administrators to construct a basic history of the origin and early evolution of the initiative (Carter, 1998). Most of what is otherwise known about midnight basketball comes from journalistic sources that tend to be essentially anecdotal and incomplete. Those few scholarly works that exist (Derezotes, 1995; Farrell, Johnson, Sapp, Pumphrey, & Freeman, 1995) are essentially short-term, evaluative descriptions of individual midnight basketball leagues driven as much by the expectations of funding agents as by the concerns of policy evaluation or social scientific knowledge.

This interpretive analysis, one of the first products of a larger and more ambitious research program involving sport and recreation-based outreach and intervention initiatives in the contemporary United States, uses a variety of original empirical sources and research experiences. First and foremost are the archival materials collected for a study of the political developments involving midnight basketball in the context of the 1994 crime bill debates mentioned above. As part of this analysis, my research assistants and I compiled extensive, systematic samples of newspaper and magazine coverage of the legislative process and conducted close, careful readings of congressional hearings on the matter. During this process, we also collected extensive secondary and primary materials pertaining to the inception and evolution of the midnight basketball concept from its origins in Glenarden, Maryland, under Standifer and established telephone contacts with a number of current midnight basketball league administrators and organizers. In addition, this article draws on three on-the-ground, ethnographic experiences with midnight basketball programs in Chicago, San Diego, and Minneapolis.²

I draw on these materials, first of all, to construct a basic historical narrative of the origin and evolution of midnight basketball as a policy initiative and object of political discussion and debate. My broader analytic aim, however, is to develop an overview and critique of this program and the public attention it has attracted, focusing especially on its racial form and symbolic function considered in the context of the cultural politics of crime, violence, and risk in urban America. This critical interpretation is guided by

the theoretical principles I have laid out in a previous, Gramscian-inflected work describing sport as a “contested racial terrain” (Hartmann, 2000). In contrast to both prevailing popular opinion on one hand and dominant scholarly critique on the other, sport in this framework is understood as a racial terrain that is at once strikingly progressive and deeply problematic. But perhaps more important for the present analysis is that a full understanding of sport’s racial character requires attention not only to the racial organization of sport but also an awareness of the broader symbolic significance of sport in the public sphere, the racialized “cultural politics” (Gusfield, 1981) in which sport is implicated.

SPORTS FOR THE UNDERSERVED

In their generative treatment of the emerging social problems industry in sport, Pitter and Andrews (1997) situated midnight basketball—which they see, as I do, as paradigmatic for the entire industry—in the context of the social organization of sport in the United States conceived as a whole system of provision and consumption. Their discussion is informed by John Wilson’s (1994) important history on the matter.³ Wilson’s vision of the American sport system begins from the absence of universal sport provision in the United States and the concomitant domination of market- and consumption-based modes of sport access and delivery. These forces have combined, especially since the 1960s, to produce a “two-tiered” or “two-stream” system whereby “people who have the access to the disposable income and free time necessary to consume these services” have their sport and recreation needs served, whereas “the poor [and otherwise disadvantaged] are left with a shrinking pool of public . . . and private services, none of which they can afford” (Pitter & Andrews, 1997, p. 86). That is not to say that poor and disadvantaged populations must rely exclusively on market-based resources. Indeed, there has long been a relatively large, if decentralized system of public sport provision operated through private, philanthropic organizations; local parks and recreation departments; and community centers and schools. This is where midnight basketball fits into Pitter and Andrews’s scheme. As with other social problems-based sporting initiatives, midnight basketball leagues emerge by taking advantage of resources and funding niches that are not sport specific but are targeted to variously disadvantaged youth and their communities. League operators locate these funding opportunities and develop sports-based programs around them. Indeed, Pitter and Andrews described the social problems approach as a “new style of bringing sport and recreation to America’s underserved youth” (p. 86).

This interpretation of midnight basketball as a mode of sport provision for essentially disadvantaged and underserved populations is an obvious and appropriate place to start. For one thing, whatever other, larger objectives and ideals may be embedded in or projected onto these leagues, midnight basketball is, in a very basic and obvious way, a sports and recreation operation first and foremost. Indeed, the core element or belief built into the initiative as Standifer first conceived it was precisely that

basketball would bring poor, inner-city youth and young men of color in the door—that these men would come to play ball (Carter, 1998, p. 27). The supply side of this equation is also important. As anyone who worked in public sport areas well knows, sports practitioners, especially those in depressed or disadvantaged communities, began to realize in the mid- to late-1980s that if they were going to sustain (if not expand) their offerings, they would need to attach them to larger public spending priorities and funding trends. This was precisely the point of the 1994 NRPA report quoted in my introduction: to create a new justification for funding sport and recreation type programs. Here, it is important to emphasize that the problem sports providers faced was not just one of the limited resources but of declining resources as well. Beginning with dramatic budget cuts to public parks and urban recreation departments in the 1970s (Ingham, 1985; Shivers & Halper, 1981) and intensifying with rising liability costs and the elimination of “extracurriculars” in schools in the 1980s, funding and support for public sport provision has been in dramatic decline (for discussions, see Chalip, 1988; Kelley, 1997; Rauner, Stanton, & Wynn, 1994). It is probably not too much to suggest that it is the cuts and declines in public provision that made sport administrators and operators more responsive than ever before to nontraditional, non-sport-based funding sources and thus account for the watershed turn of the sport and recreation industry away from the “sport for all” ethos that developed in the 1960s and 1970s back to what Schultz et al. (1995) have called its “social interventionist” roots.⁴

Conceptualizing midnight basketball in terms of sport and recreation provision also puts in clear relief the social disparities and inequalities produced by a market-dominated sport delivery system. Pitter and Andrews (1997, pp. 92-93) made this point by contrasting the slow and uncertain evolution of problems-based sports programs with the rapid takeoff and proliferation of consumption-driven suburban soccer leagues across the country, symbolized by the spectacular success of the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO). Very simply, wealthier neighborhoods and communities have resources that others do not to offset funding shortfalls and cutbacks. (For more on youth soccer and its place in the American social landscape, see also Andrews, 1999; Andrews, Pitter, Zwick, & Ambrose, 1997.) And indeed, Pitter and Andrews concluded their analysis with an ominous and in my view fully justified prediction about the limits of programs such as midnight basketball in terms of “serving America’s underserved youth.” The social problems-based approach, they forecasted, will be “insufficient to sustain the provision of sport and recreation to disadvantaged communities” (p. 96).

And the discrepancies between these two modes of youth sport delivery are not just limited to unequal access. They involve differential treatment as well. Pitter and Andrews (1997) touched on this when they pointed out that midnight basketball programs are typically “bounded by strict rules, a code of conduct and mandatory workshops,” whereas suburban soccer programs tend to be oriented toward participant-driven demands for recreation, physical fitness, and fun as well as to athletic achievement. They go

on to suggest that these different modes of treatment “may be exacerbating the social and racial division[s] responsible for the very conditions the [problems-based] initiatives are trying to improve” (p. 93).

These observations are of the utmost importance, and I will have a good deal more to say about them below, particularly with respect to their racial subtext and implications. However, it is important to realize that a sport-based and market-oriented perspective affords limited analytical leverage by which to develop these points properly. Such an orientation provides little insight into why coaches and administrators presumably interested only in securing support for underfunded programs would adopt such radically different styles of running sports programs and dealing with program participants. More fundamentally, although conceptualizing midnight basketball in terms of its meanings and implications for sport provision may help us to understand why sports providers have found it expedient to adopt social problems rhetoric to secure scarce program resources, it cannot account for why public policy makers would be inclined to fund sports-based programs in the first place. This is a crucial point because sport provision was about the last thing that program funders, editorial writers, and citizen supporters had on their minds when promoting the idea of midnight basketball leagues as an innovation in American public policy.

NOT JUST FUN AND GAMES

In one of the earliest profiles introducing Standifer’s fledgling Maryland midnight basketball concept to the nation, *The Washington Post* assured its readers that “there are more serious things than basketball going on here” (August 18, 1988). The sports-based aspect of the program was, according to the *Post*, “just one part of a living clinic . . . in the omnipresent war on drugs.” When *The New York Times* picked up the story a few months later, its treatment similarly downplayed the athletically oriented component. “In a Late-Night Sport, the Game is Fighting Crime,” its headline read (February 13, 1989, Section 1, p. 49). These stories, it is important to note, were not run in the sports pages but in the main news sections of both papers. Similarly, when the CHA proposed its variation on the midnight basketball concept to HUD officers in the fall of 1989, the program was promoted as a “positive alternative to gangs and hanging out on street corners for high risk young adults” and described as both an “integral part of a much larger anti-drug strategy” and a “proactive step . . . in deter[ring] gang activity.” Neither sport nor recreation provision (nor, for that matter, physical fitness) was mentioned anywhere in its cover letter or the 10-page (single-spaced) proposal outlining the details of the plan.⁵ This in mind, the CHA must have been pleased to see *The Chicago Tribune* rate the idea a “slam dunk” (on its main editorial page, December 5, 1989), opining that “It’s not just fun and games” but rather part of an “innovative” set of ideas to “break the cycle of crime, poverty and dependence that plagues life in public housing.”

And this is not just a matter of how these programs were conceptualized and promoted. Early midnight basketball initiatives were funded and operated by public agencies and private corporations with no explicit connections to or even interest in athletics. Standifer himself was a retired computer systems analyst and town manager, not a coach or athletic administrator. Legend has it, in fact, that Standifer got interested in basketball only after he concluded that it was the “activity of choice” for young people in his community late at night (Carter, 1998, pp. 26-27). The coaches during the first couple of seasons of Standifer’s league came not from parks and recreation departments or other typical basketball circles but from the Maryland State Department of Corrections and the U.S. Marshal Service. Interestingly, Standifer’s first corporate sponsor was not an athletic company but the Beer Institute of America (Carter, 1998, pp. 27-28, 32).

The programs I have done fieldwork on and around have similar stories. The San Diego program, for example, was run by an organization called High Five America, a Christian missionary group not unlike the more clearly labeled and well-known Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The basketball-based Stay Alive program I worked with in Minnesota was funded by the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (DHFS) as part of an initiative on violence prevention that began following a summer with an extremely high number of homicides in majority-minority neighborhoods and communities (Barnes-Josiah, Ansari, & Kress, 1996). Its planners were not interested in basketball, anymore than they were interested in figure skating, motor racing, or cross-country skiing. (Few of them were even athletic or knew anything about basketball; they actually had to go out and recruit staffers with experience working in the athletic arena to make the program happen.) Rather, they simply saw in basketball an opportunity for social outreach and intervention. As one local city official told me in explaining his decision to dedicate a significant chunk of money toward a basketball-based program in the Twin Cities,

I don’t care about basketball at all—and neither does the Mayor or the City Council. That’s why we’ve got a parks and rec. department. I only care about finding programs that decrease the rates of violence and crime in our neighborhoods. That’s what this program is all about: violence prevention. If it is just about basketball, we shouldn’t be funding it—and if that’s what this program turns out to be I’ll stop funding it in a second. I’ll cut off the dollars myself. (Field notes, October 1999)

When federal funding was first allocated for midnight basketball in the early 1990s, it was not through the President’s Council on Physical Fitness or the grassroots sports development arm of the U.S. Olympic Committee, or even the National Parks and Recreation titles. It was not even through any of the various nongovernmental agencies and organizations that compose the decentralized American sport delivery system. Rather, it came through HUD (albeit a department headed at the time by a former professional football star). And when Democrats tried to expand and more fully

institutionalize funding for midnight basketball and a host of problems-based athletic programs in 1994, it was only under the rubric of two other, ostensibly larger pieces of legislation. One, led by Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder (CO) and Senator Carol Mosely-Braun (IL) would have included midnight basketball in an omnibus education bill—Goals 2000: Educate America Act—designed to improve high school graduation rates nationwide. The other Democratic approach was initiated by National Resources Committee Chair George Miller (CA) and his fellow Congressman Bruce Vento (MN) as part of their proposed Urban Recreation and At-Risk Youth Act.

The point here is not that the midnight basketball initiative was about more than basketball. The point, more precisely, is that for many administrators, funders, and observers, midnight basketball was about *anything but* basketball. Basketball, in all of these accounts, was merely a means to some larger ends. In naming midnight basketball one of his thousand points of light, President Bush himself may have made the point most clearly: “The last thing midnight basketball is about,” the president insisted, “is basketball” (quoted by Carter, 1998, p. 45 from *The Washington Post* in 1991). This is a rhetoric we must take seriously, if for no other reason than that it provided the justification for the funding and institutional support that was making this experimental concept a reality. And it is not enough simply to situate midnight basketball in the context of these other, nonsport concerns. More than this, we must make this context of urban problems and policy responses itself the focal point of the analysis. Anything else would be to mistake the forest for the trees.

IMAGINING AND TARGETING URBAN RISK

Having established that social problems outside of sport are the key to midnight basketball’s public appeal and political significance is only the first step, for it is not at all apparent what social problems midnight basketball (and the problems-based athletic industry in general) was supposed to resolve. *The Washington Post*, for example, thought midnight basketball to be part of the war on drugs; *The New York Times* believed it to be about crime fighting. When the CHA proposed league sponsorship to HUD, it described the goals of midnight basketball as twofold: deterring gang activities and part of a larger antidrug strategy. Following their lead, *The Chicago Tribune* described midnight basketball as about “breaking the cycle” of poverty and public dependence that “plagued” public housing in Chicago and around the country. In Minneapolis, late-night basketball was part of the city’s “youth violence prevention” initiative (thus the title “Stay Alive”) funded through the city’s DHFS. When midnight basketball finally found a legislative home in Congress in 1994, it was as part of the Youth Development Block Grant introduced into the House version of the federal crime bill in March.

It would be easy to get sidetracked in a discussion of which of these social problems was perceived as more fundamental or acute. But in my view, what is most important about them is what they all shared (besides basketball, of course), and that was the desire to reach out and influence the

lives of a very specific social group: poor, inner-city youth and young men of color. Midnight basketball, that is to say, was targeted not to a specific social problem but to a specific social group, a population that was considered acutely at risk and hard to reach.

Some advocates were more explicit about this than others. The Minneapolis DHFS, for example, made no bones about the fact that they had decided to underwrite a basketball-based program because after having funded a dozen or so programs targeted to young men of color, they had found that the Ghetto Basketball Association was the only program that had successfully attracted the young men of color who, as both victims and perpetrators, constituted the vast majority of cases of homicide in the city at the time (Barnes-Josiah et al., 1996; Wixon, 1998). For their part, the agencies and organizations I worked with in and around in Chicago in the early 1990s did not care one way or another about whether their grant proposals and funding discussions focused around issues of drugs, crime, violence, gangs, or conflict resolution. They would simply tailor or rewrite proposals, position papers, and personal pitches depending on the particular interests of the foundation or funding agency they were appealing to at the moment—or better yet, throw all of these into the mix. This was not, I came to realize, because they did not care about the larger social ends toward which their sports-based programs were oriented; rather, it was because they saw all of these problems as intimately interconnected and inseparable, at least insofar as securing funding and institutional support was concerned. Targeting one of them was no more or less appropriate, in their minds, than targeting another—or, again, all of them together.

If there is qualification to this argument, it has to do with race. The program's racial contours and character were typically absent from the overt descriptions and appeals used by midnight basketball advocates. This is particularly interesting because I am firmly convinced that the most distinctive, indispensable feature of midnight basketball as a policy initiative and object of public attention had to do with its purported appeal to African American men. This is an argument my research associate Darren Wheelock and I devoted concerted attention to in our study of the 1994 crime bill discourse. We found that 40% of the time midnight basketball references came right before or after names or neighborhoods that were clearly coded as African American. And the racial roots of the Republican attack on the liberal preventative components of the crime bill through the symbol of midnight basketball are revealed when we consider that there were a number of other sport and recreation-oriented prevention provisions included in the bill (after-school recreation programs, Ounce of Prevention, Olympic development centers)—all of which were even more costly than midnight basketball, yet none of which was explicitly targeted in Republican attacks. The only thing that distinguished midnight basketball was its clear and undeniable connection with poor, young, African American men. Photographs and visual imagery also support this point. In my entire time researching midnight basketball, I have found only one photograph or other visual represent-

ation that did not explicitly portray an individual of color (and that one was from a radical publication clearly trying to undermine the racial imagery that animated popular conceptions of the program). Finally, the whole Democratic idea of expanding federal support for midnight basketball in 1994 was an overt appeal to African Americans and the Congressional Black Caucus. President Clinton's own references to midnight basketball may, in fact, provide the clearest evidence of midnight basketball's racial character.

The president made midnight basketball's racial images and connotations manifest in his first public mention of the program in April of 1994 when he connected midnight basketball with a plan whereby his Housing Secretary Henry Cisneros (himself a prominent minority member of the Clinton cabinet) would provide emergency funding for "gang-infested" public housing in Chicago. When the president spoke about midnight basketball on June 17, it was at a CHA housing project where he told his predominantly African American audience that midnight basketball was a program designed to assist "people just like you." A week later, this time at a park in inner-city St. Louis, Clinton deflected questions about the controversial provisions of the Racial Justice Act by instead ruminating on "prevention programs" such as "midnight basketball." Finally, it is worth noting that Clinton gave perhaps his most important and impassioned public defense of the crime bill—replete with an extended discussion of recreation and midnight basketball—in front of an all-Black AME Gospel church in Atlanta, Georgia.

In one sense, this reminds us that the connections between basketball and Blackness run so deep and were so taken for granted, they almost do not need saying. Dave Shields's (1999) description of the NBA seems to apply to midnight basketball: It is "a place where, without ever acknowledging it—and because it is never acknowledged, it's that much more potent and telling—white fans and black players . . . enact every racial issue and tension in the culture at large" (p. xiii). But this is also and more important reminiscent of the awkward, paradoxical place of race and racial problems in American culture in general, especially with respect to images of crime, violence, and social disorder in the post-civil rights era. On one hand, racial inequalities and injustices are still clearly with us; yet at the same time, these issues are extremely difficult to discuss or even acknowledge given ideologies of racial equality and color-blind, race-neutral, liberal democratic discourse itself (Chambliss, 2000; Russell, 1998).

There are good reasons to be skeptical of the racialized assumptions and stereotypes about risk and response built into midnight basketball initiatives. Just one example is the belief that late-night hours constituted the period that was most problematic for this population. At least for the younger members of this target group, there is a good deal of research that suggests that high-crime hours may not be late-night hours but after-school and early evening hours (Fox, 1999; Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Nevertheless, it is not surprising that this population was so targeted. The social problems of those generally designated as the "urban underclass" (note the seemingly

race neutral label) were very much on the public agenda at this time. Poverty and unemployment, welfare dependence, drug addiction, crime and violence—these were all at levels the University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson (1987), in perhaps the most important public and scholarly statement on the matter, described as having reached “catastrophic proportion.” In the Chicago housing projects where midnight basketball got its first major trial, the problems were particularly acute. According to one of Wilson’s former students Sudhir Venkatesh (2000), in fact, 90% of CHA residents were unemployed and on welfare in the late 1980s, 75% lived in female-headed households, and project neighborhoods had the highest crime rates in the city.

One final dimension about midnight basketball should be mentioned in this context: its gender-specific character. The “gendered” dimensions of the problems of the urban underclass—rendered visible by Wilson’s obsession with teenage pregnancy, out-of-wedlock births, and the pathology of female-headed households—were beginning to be addressed explicitly for the first time at this time. Much of this emphasis came from feminists who focused on the role of women in the welfare state (the well-known collection edited by Linda Gordon, 1990, being a case in point). But the young men in these communities were rapidly being recognized as a problem for community leaders and public policy makers as well. This was not only because no one really knew what to do about them but also because they were conspicuous by their perceived absence from family life, legitimate employment, and public life on one hand and hypervisibility when it came to crime, violence, and delinquency on the other.

In any case, if the popularity of the midnight basketball concept reflected a clear public consensus on *who* the problem was, there was much less agreement on what kind or kinds of problems this population presented, how best to deal with these problems, or even why basketball leagues constituted an appropriate and promising policy response. Indeed, few people appeared willing or able to even talk about these complicated issues and alternatives. As a way into them, I will explore what I believe to be their most straightforward and concrete dimension: the divergent and competing visions of sport embedded in this initiative. Delving into these differences—which are connected with but not reducible to prevailing liberal and conservative political ideologies—will not only begin to unpack the different conceptions of risk and response contained within this consensus, it will give us a better understanding of the power and appeal of the midnight basketball concept itself.

VISIONS OF RECREATION AS A RESPONSE TO RISK

Part of the broad appeal of midnight basketball as a response to the perceived problems of inner-city youth and young men of color was that basketball was (and is) presumed to be an activity having a unique appeal to this otherwise problematic, hard-to-reach population. It was, as my Minneapolis informants put it, the only way to reach these guys, to get this socially

dislocated population in the door. They had come to this conclusion reluctantly (on one hand, they were deeply skeptical of sport; on the other, they did not want to fall into racial stereotypes about the cultural tastes of young African American men) and only after having invested thousands of dollars in a dozen other outreach programs the previous year. But it seems to have been warranted: A preliminary evaluation of the demographic profile of program participants revealed that more than 90% of program participants came from the targeted population, an unprecedented figure at least in the Twin Cities (Hartmann, Sidebottom, & Wheelock).

But outreach and recruitment is only one part of any social policy initiative. What still begs discussion is what compelled community leaders, politicians, policy makers, and bureaucrats, most of whom had no particular interest or experience in sports, to believe that having these at-risk young men run around in short pants and try to throw a rubber ball through a metal hoop might make a difference. It would seem that we are back to the question implied at the outset of the article: What would basketball accomplish for these at-risk, inner-city young men of color?

The question is all the more perplexing when we consider how limited these programs actually were and how little concrete evidence of their effectiveness existed. To begin with, the midnight basketball concept lacked any sort of coherent theoretical rationale. It was, in a very basic way, an immediate, practical response to a perceived social problem. Of course, social programs do not require clearly articulated philosophical statements to be effective public policies. But even on a concrete, programmatic level, the most extensive basketball-based projects operated only a few nights a week for a couple of months a year and served no more than a couple hundred individuals. Standifer's original pilot program, for example, counted only 60 participants during its first year of operation (1986) and still had only 84 in 1988, the year in which it was "discovered" by the national media. The Chicago plan, for its part, called for a total of 160 participants. Although this number may be impressive as a basketball league, it paled in comparison to the estimated 6,600 at-risk young adults residing in the Horner and Rockwell homes, much less to the 85,000 who lived in CHA housing across the city. On the face of it, then, these programs would seem to have had even less chance of significantly mitigating the problems of at-risk youth than Pitter and Andrews (1997) believed that all such programs have of equalizing sport provision across the country.

Yet, spectacular results were claimed for midnight basketball. Most notable in this respect was Standifer's widely publicized assertion that midnight basketball had reduced crime by 30% in Glenarden during its first 3 years of operation. It was a classic case of a spurious statistical correlation based in nothing more than the observation that his program had been in operation during the same years that the crime rate in his Washington, D.C. community had dropped by that amount.⁶ Nevertheless, the claim was repeated regularly in the media and often inflated greatly, indeed doubled at one point by President Bush (quoted in Carter, 1998, p. 45). This might be

expected in regular popular discourse, but it has been repeated in several supposedly scholarly publications as well. Farrell et al. (1995), for example, claimed that their Milwaukee-area basketball program led to a 30% reduction in crime; McCann and Peters (1996) claimed that a Phoenix project they analyzed resulted in 10.4% fewer juvenile arrests and a 50% reduction in juvenile problems reported to police.

What may be most striking about all of this is *not* that the midnight basketball concept was deemed an acceptable experiment by community organizers, political elites, policy makers, and public commentators. What is most striking is that this rather flimsy idea was so widely embraced and so uniformly celebrated as an innovative and exciting policy initiative. In a commentary on its main editorial page, *The Chicago Sun-Times* summed up the initiative in four words: "Simple. Logical. Cheap. Effective," and asked, "Why didn't anyone think of [it] sooner?" ("Good Sense Scores a Point," 1989, p. 60). A nonscientific poll conducted by *The Chicago Defender*, one of the nation's historic African American newspapers, found that fully 85% of Chicagoans surveyed approved of the program, seeing it as giving youths "opportunities to get involved in a positive and constructive activity" (Locke, 1990). Even during the height of Republican attacks on midnight basketball in the summer of 1994, midnight basketball seems to have retained relatively impressive support in public opinion polls. For example, a Gallup poll that asked respondents if they favored "providing local communities with federal tax money to provide social programs and activities for low-income children such as *Midnight Basketball*" as a proposal to reduce crime found 65% support, a figure 10% higher than support for the compromise crime bill taken as a whole.⁷

How, then, do we account for the almost universal appeal and enthusiastic support for a program that appeared, on the face of it, to be extremely limited, had no clear rationale, and had produced no real evidence of effectiveness? Two factors, I believe, were crucial. One of them involved the political climate and recent transformations in social policies at the federal level. I am thinking here primarily of the cuts to the various social programs that constituted the American welfare state as ushered in under President Ronald Reagan's "new federalism" (cf. Wacquant, 1994; Wacquant & Wilson, 1989). These cuts hit hardest in the nation's cities, home to many of the nation's most distressed citizens ("the truly disadvantaged," in W. J. Wilson's [1987] terms). Between 1982 and 1987, to give just one telling example, the nation's public housing budget was cut by 87%; at one point, Venkatesh (2000, p. 116) said it got so bad in Chicago that the CHA's request for money to bring its housing up to minimum standards actually exceeded HUD's nationwide budget for all such repairs! Such budgetary cutbacks were, moreover, exacerbated in urban areas that had seen major portions of their jobs and industrial bases leave for suburbs, the Southwest, and overseas. These transformations left community organizers and urban policy makers with few options and extremely limited resources for dealing with the problems of the at-risk, urban underclass. This meant that policy initiatives had,

first and foremost, to be inexpensive (or, as the *Sun-Times* said, “cheap”). Few other options were available. It was, as *The Chicago Tribune* called it (November 30, 1989), a “desperation shot.”

I will have more to say about the meaning and symbolic significance of these resource shortfalls and cutbacks shortly. But resources (or their absence) were not the only factor at play here. As with most major social policy shifts, there were also powerful ideological underpinnings driving and legitimating these policy changes and budgetary cutbacks.⁸ Proponents also had high hopes for midnight basketball because they really believed or at least wanted to believe it would be an effective response to urban risk, and they believed this for reasons pertaining to their perceptions about the social value of sport participation itself. Unfortunately, it is with this second dimension of midnight basketball’s widespread appeal that the story gets complicated. This is not only because the vision of sport embedded in the midnight basketball concept is multifaceted but also because these different visions are linked with competing perceptions and presuppositions about this population and the problems they presented.

At least three different ideas or sets of ideas about midnight basketball and its purported effectiveness for dealing with at-risk urban youth can be identified.⁹ One drew on sport’s long-standing public reputation as a positive, progressive social force, for being a means for overcoming social disadvantage as well as providing a hedge against delinquency, crime and violence (Segrave, 1980). Sports participation, in this conception, was primarily about character building and the cultivation of self-discipline—especially for boys and young men or for turning boys into young men (MacLeod, 1983; see also Novak, 1976; Oriard, 1991). Expressed most frequently by coaches and athletes themselves, this is what I might call the traditional sport idealist view. It saw sport participation itself as inherently interventionist because it required and thus created a strong moral character through the virtues of effort, competition, teamwork, and fair play.

This idealist line had little appeal for no-nonsense policy makers, politicians, and public commentators who had no particular interest or belief in the value of sport. But many of these actors nevertheless realized other possibilities in midnight basketball. Perhaps the most familiar came mainly from the new generation of liberal Democrats—whose political icons were figures such as Carol Mosley Braun, Patricia Schroeder, Charles Shumer, and the president himself. In this newer conception, competitiveness, individual accountability, and moral character were de-emphasized in favor of using sport as a hook to attract at-risk youth into programs and activities that would educate, counsel, mentor, and train. Sport, in this instrumentalist vision, was an activity whose energies and excitement could be redirected toward other, more socially significant ends; it had little or no intrinsic social value on its own.

A somewhat different conception of risk was at work in this instrumentalist approach as well. The traditional sports idealist vision saw the problems of risk primarily in moral terms, an emphasis reflected in the

Chicago project's inclusion of haircuts and personal grooming as parts of the program and its broader concerns with self-discipline, conflict resolution, and family values. In contrast, those who saw sport as a hook tended to de-emphasize competitiveness, individual accountability, and moral character in favor of shortcomings in human and social capital—things such as education, job skills, and social networking—lacking as a result of structural inequalities and disadvantages. In proposing the midnight basketball pilot program to the Housing Department, the CHA had taken pains to call attention to both dimensions. Midnight basketball, their proposal noted, “takes an old concept—sports as a constructive character-building activity—and gives it a new twist—the organization of a structured, ‘after-hours’ program.” Using sport as a hook, the CHA believed its program would move beyond Standifer’s original midnight basketball model by adding “components” that would “encourage the participants to take charge of their own lives, attain legitimate economic dependence and become constructive family members and citizens” (p. 2). Indeed, what made midnight basketball attractive was that it held the promise of reestablishing the social fabric and moral fiber of life for these at-risk young men at the same time—essentially what George Bush meant to highlight with his thousand points of light foundation; a set of ideas that his son would call “compassionate conservatism” or Robert Putnam (2000) would later call “civic engagement.” And if Putnam’s thesis was formulated as a critique of bowling alone, midnight basketball offered precisely the practice of playing basketball together that Putnam took as ideal. So it was that CHA Chairman Vincent Lane promoted the program to the public. “We’re going to try to move them down the road to being contributing citizens.”

It is in this context that the institutional arrangements behind these programs take on added significance. I am thinking here of their public-private partnerships by which these programs were both funded and operated. More than just a funding tool, public-private collaborations were built around and in fact required the cultivation of social relationships and voluntary ties among participants from a diversity of social backgrounds. These considerations clearly help to explain why President Bush went so far as to single out midnight basketball (one of only three of the thousand points of light initiatives highlighted as such) as exemplary in his proclamation recognizing a “National Celebration of Community Service.”¹⁰

Given the extent to which it has come to be identified with proactive, preventive approaches to the problems of at-risk urban young men since 1994, it would be easy to overlook the third, much more politically conservative element of midnight basketball. This element is suggested by the very idea that at-risk youngsters had to be kept off the streets during high crime, late-night hours as well in the intensive involvement of law enforcement personnel and the requirement of having uniformed police officers serve as security for all games. As much as midnight basketball appealed to various liberal advocates, in other words, it also contained a harder edged, “keep ‘em off the streets” mentality. This is what might be called its “containment and

control” dimension, the feature that more than any other marked Standifer’s midnight basketball concept as original and unique within the long legacy of interventionist sports-based programs in American history. This aspect of the multifaceted midnight basketball concept shared many of the assumptions about the moral and social roots of the problems of at-risk, inner-city youth. But whereas the various liberal-interventionist lines saw sport as a remedy for these deficiencies, this approach was more inclined to believe that the tendencies toward crime and violence among young African American men could not be prevented or inhibited but only contained and controlled. Standifer, who made a point of parking police paddy wagons outside the gym in the early days of the program, suggested as much in an interview he gave a local publication (*The Maryland Weekly*) at the time: “If you could fill 24 hours of a young adults [*sic*] day, you could eliminate a lot of the problems. Since we can’t do that, we’ve chosen what we feel is the most vulnerable time frame” (quoted in Carter, 1998, p. 30). Others made stronger statements. For them, there was nothing constructive about practices of sport such as basketball because there was little hope for reconstructing or rehabilitating the population toward which it was directed.

Implicit in this vision as well was the assumption that the risk these populations posed was not to themselves but to others; they threatened the order and stability of urban communities in general. And in fact, this harder edged, surveillance and control dimension of midnight basketball fit perfectly with what would soon be called the “new penology” (Freeley & Simon, 1992) emerging in American criminal justice circles at the time. Connected with rising fear of crime and ultimately translated into massive public funding for more prisons and police nationwide, many politicians and policy makers were becoming convinced that the impulse to risky behaviors and lifestyles among poor, inner-city boys and young men was so deeply rooted that it could not be prevented. The best way to deal with the problems of at-risk, inner-city youth, thus, was simply to get them off the streets, to keep them under strict social control.

It is, of course, not difficult to imagine how these three very different visions of and approaches to dealing with at-risk urban young men through basketball might come into conflict. Nevertheless, what should not be overlooked is the fact that, at least initially, this strikingly diverse and otherwise competing set of ideals and interests comfortably coexisted in the space of midnight basketball. Indeed, it is my belief that what gave midnight basketball its initial widespread public appeal and generated its unique bipartisan support is precisely the way in which it offered a unique and unlikely synthesis of otherwise competing approaches to the problems of at-risk young people. Liberal Democrats, for example, could see these programs as part of a larger attempt to compensate for social and educational disadvantages African American young men faced in the inner city. Conservative Republicans, for their part, could emphasize the way in which it simply kept these at-risk youth off the streets, out of public circulation, and under strict supervision. And those who found themselves outside of or between established

Republican and Democratic positions could focus on the program's traditional, liberal ideology of character building, individual worth, and racial advancement.

There was a powerful, if unstated racial element here as well—specifically, sport's long-standing reputation and historical legacy as an institutional leader in the struggle for the advancement of racial minorities certainly is a factor here as well (Hartmann, 2000, pp. 32-34). Many of those who championed midnight basketball drew on this color-blind, universalist rhetoric at one time or another. Gil Walker, the CHA sports director who imported Standifer's midnight basketball model to Chicago, was one of those: "Come into the gym," he told Vivian Carter (1998), "and all of a sudden those barriers are broken down because of basketball. Basketball transcends gang affiliation, it transcends race, it transcends economic situation, basketball transcends all of that nonsense" (p. 38).

Suffice it to say, then, that this unique (if uneasy) synthesis of competing approaches to the problems of at-risk youth and young men constituted the real innovation and true genius of Standifer's midnight basketball concept. Indeed, it seems to me no accident that it was the socially liberal, fiscally conservative Republicans like Jack Kemp and George Bush who originally championed midnight basketball on a national scale.

POINTS OF CONTENTION, UNDERLYING CONSENSUS

Ultimately, of course, midnight basketball did not offer a workable coalition or stable synthesis. The bipartisan support that midnight basketball had enjoyed since its inception in 1990 evaporated suddenly and spectacularly in the summer of 1994 when conservative Republicans attacked the program as a symbol of everything that was wrong with the original version of the 1994 crime bill. Part of the reason midnight basketball became the object of Republican ridicule and attack had to do with the ideological differences between liberal Democratic approaches to crime, risk, and delinquency ("prevention," as they came to be called) and the more surveillance and control Republican emphasis on increased prisons and police, the contrasts I alluded to in the previous section. Once Republicans realized midnight basketball's inherent limitations as a tool for social surveillance and control—that it served only a handful of young men, that it operated only a few days a week for a limited number of weeks per year, and so forth—they were free to relinquish any commitment to midnight basketball and attack it as a symbol of everything wrong with liberal, prevention-oriented approaches to crime and violence.

Another factor leading to the breakdown of the uneasy consensus that had once surrounded midnight basketball involved federal funding and governmental involvement in general. Here, it was not so much the cost per se as it was the fact that this increased funding would have gotten the federal government into the role of permanently funding such programs (rather than just providing startup grants). The fate of Clinton's showcase "Americorps" project, as described by Pitter and Andrews (1997), is a useful

parallel. The program initially enjoyed solid support from Republicans. As soon as the Clinton administration tried to expand the funding beyond the initial limits of 2 or 3 years per program and only for programs with the potential for securing funding from other public and/or private sources in subsequent years, bipartisan support quickly dissipated. "The whole focus," according to Pitter and Andrews, "was to motivate Americans to . . . develop solutions to social problems that would attract and later be sustained by private funding or other nonfederal public funding" (p. 87).

Finally, there was the broader political symbolism that surrounded midnight basketball. As mentioned earlier, my colleague Darren Wheelock and I have spent a good deal of time analyzing the central role midnight basketball played in 1994 crime bill debates (Hartmann & Wheelock, 2000). Constructed as an exercise in the study of racial codes in American political processes (cf. Carmines & Stimson, 1989; Edsall & Edsall, 1991; Lieberman, 1995), we showed how Republicans used the racial symbol of midnight basketball to persuade a largely White, Anglo-Saxon public to be less positive about and supportive of the proactive, preventative aspects of the bill championed by liberal Democrats. In this context, I might also note that Republicans were able to mobilize the long-standing cultural stereotypes about the lightness and frivolity associated with sport to trivialize prevention programs more generally. Perhaps, it may be that any attempt to leverage political points through recreation-based programs will inevitably be vulnerable to this attack in American culture. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that in this same exact debate over federal crime policy, the NRA defended its interests against gun control in part by appealing to the sanctity of recreational hunting in American culture. One can almost not help but come to the conclusion that the racial identity of those presumed to practice this seemingly dangerous recreational form had something to do with the fact that this was an argument that (as far as I know) was never seriously challenged. In any case, equipped with midnight basketball, conservative Republicans were able to turn the tables in the legislative debates and media coverage of these debates and jettison some \$3 billion in prevention programs from a bill that had once been considered a done deal. The point here is not just that support for midnight basketball broke down around racial-political lines. More than this, it is that the racially coded midnight basketball played a critical and essentially conservative role in shaping federal crime policy legislation as we know it today.

As important and disheartening as it is to recognize the overtly racial (if not simply racist) roots and implications of the Republican attack on midnight basketball in 1994, it would be a mistake to now overlook the fact that it was Democrats who brought race back into these debates in the first place by championing the racially symbolic midnight basketball initiative. I say this not because there is something inherently wrong with the general notion of appealing to racial interests in promoting and defending political ideologies and agendas. (Indeed, I would argue, contra the universalistic arguments advanced by scholars such as William Julius Wilson, Theda

Skocpol, or Todd Gitlin, that it is very difficult if not impossible to launch meaningful social challenges to racial hierarchies and inequalities without putting race at the front and center of these struggles.) The question, rather, is with some of the assumptions about race—both in general terms and as experienced by young African American men—Clinton and other Democratic leaders brought to bear on this legislative process. And here we run into some inconsistencies, inconsistencies that reveal certain affinities between liberal Democratic and conservative Republican attitudes and approaches regarding race that may not have first been apparent.

One of the problems with the racial attitudes, assumptions, and priorities liberal Democrats brought into the 1994 crime bill is that they made their racial appeal in covert, symbolic ways—that is, through small, ostensibly race-neutral programs like midnight basketball—rather than overtly and directly. This approach not only betrays an underlying cynicism and futility with respect to the politics of race, it seems to have allowed Republicans to play a race card that the Democrats were unable to respond to effectively. (To do so, Democrats would have had to acknowledge a racial politics seemingly at odds with their expressed color-blind ideology.) Another problem is that the crime bill did not address well-established racial inequalities and outright racism in the criminal justice system (D. Cole, 1999; Feld, 1999; Lusane, 1991; Mauer & the Sentencing Project, 1999; Miller, 1996), a failure evidenced most dramatically by the elimination of racial justice provisions from the final form of the bill.

More directly to the point of the present analysis is that for all of the liberal talk of the social and economic disadvantages faced by at-risk youth, the Democratic crime bill paid little or no attention in terms of policy construction or funding provisions to the social-structural context of risk. I am thinking here not just of the danger of the streets and the impoverishment of urban communities but also of the cuts to urban funding initiated during Reagan's regime, the postindustrial economic transformations that left many inner-city residents without work or prospects for work, and various forms of overt and institutional racism faced by communities of color. If these factors do not fully explain the African American problems with crime, violence, and delinquency, they certainly constitute a context that left people of color, as both communities and individuals, isolated and with very limited resources and opportunities to mobilize in response. Yet, even the most liberal components of the bill did nothing to address the structural roots of these inequalities but dealt only with their consequences through prevention-based programs such as midnight basketball.

Part of the problem here is the obvious discrepancy between liberal understandings of the problems of risk and the policies they put forward; that is, their inability to craft policies that correspond to these analyses. (For early critiques along these lines, see Kramer & Michalowski, 1995; Platt, 1994). Indeed, many of the prevention-oriented programs were based on assumptions about the existence of educational opportunities and jobs

that directly contradicted more structural understandings of the roots and causes of these supposed problems. To the extent such opportunities existed, they were far more limited than many assumed. In the CHA program, for example, the jobs that were made available were entry-level, janitorial positions paying only \$7 an hour (Dinges, 1990); midnight basketball, it would seem, was being used as much a recruitment device for service work as much as an opportunity being offered.

Given the absence of attention to external, structuralist factors contributing to the crime problem, it was almost inevitable that the entire focus of liberal crime prevention strategies was oriented toward addressing the perceived moral and behavioral shortcomings of at-risk individuals and communities themselves—whether they had to do with morals, character and self-discipline, or human and social capital. It is here, however—in these moralist and paternalist assumptions about the roots of risk and in the face of a policy regime that does little to get at their deeper structural roots—that we begin to appreciate what might be called, following George Lipsitz (1998), the deep racial consensus underlying liberal and conservative understandings of the problems of race and risk in contemporary American society. For Lipsitz, this consensus has mainly to do with how White Americans, both liberal and conservative, protect and preserve the privileges that go along with their skin color, without actually describing this agenda in explicit racial terms. This is what he called “the possessive investment in whiteness.” “Liberals,” according to Lipsitz, operate “under the name of respecting prevailing market practices, encouraging business investment in cities and helping the ‘middle class,’ conservatives under the guise of promoting state’s rights, protecting private property, and shrinking the welfare state” (p. 24). And whether viewed with “pity” or “contempt” (Scott, 1997), there is the shared belief that “minority disadvantages are said to stem from innate deficiencies rather than systematic disenfranchisement and discrimination” (p. 24).

To gain a deeper appreciation of the depth of this racial consensus and its operation in and through sport as well as the inherent symbolic dangers of using the language of race and risk in the context of any recreation-based program, I will conclude by discussing Cheryl Cole’s (1996) seminal study of the Nike corporation’s “PLAY” movement and its use of Michael Jordan in the marketing campaign that went along with it.¹¹

THE BROADER SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SPORTING INITIATIVES

In the mid-1990s—at precisely the same time midnight basketball was coming into the national consciousness—the Nike Corporation launched a splashy and ambitious campaign to revitalize youth sport nationwide by working in tandem with nonprofit, community-based agencies and organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs (whose national organization partnered with Nike on the project). The initiative was the product of a

well-publicized Youth Fitness Summit held in Washington, D.C. in 1993. The summit was ostensibly in response to the decline of public facilities for recreation and sport for youth especially in urban areas.

For America's youth . . . going out to play is getting tougher all the time. Budget cuts are forcing schools to scale back or eliminate sports and physical education programs. Communities can't afford the upkeep on public parks and recreation facilities. Safety issues have many parents fearful of letting children out of their sight. (quoted in C.L. Cole, 1996, p. 379)

PLAY—short for “participate in the lives of America's youth”—was Nike's response. It was an attempt to create a movement and network of organizations and agencies that would secure every child's “right to play.” The “principles” motivating the movement, according to the four-page “Revolutionary Manifesto” the company circulated widely around the country, were that “every child [had an] inalienable right to an active life: the joy of sport, and the pursuit of fun.”

It is not difficult to see (if not simply dismiss) the PLAY campaign as a public relations ploy. And even though she lacks behind-the-scenes, ethnographic evidence, C. L. Cole (1996) constructed a compelling case that the initiative was launched in direct response to Nike's public relations crisis of the early 1990s.¹² What is more challenging and directly relevant to the concerns of this article is explaining why the campaign was so effective—why the national Boys and Girls Clubs of America decided to enter into a partnership with Nike in bringing this movement to fruition; why the PLAY advertisements came to occupy such a central part of Nike's overall marketing strategy; why, as Cole put, Nike is publicly exalted for investing this money in youth sport even “despite” “market pressures and declines in stock value.”

Part of the explanation is fairly straightforward. “In the realm of the public,” as C. L. Cole (1996) put it, “PLAY and other Nike public-service style advertisements serve[d] as expressions of Nike's conscience and its overlapping commitment to and investment in America” (p. 380). That is to say, this campaign allowed Nike to present itself not just as a company but as part of or even representative of the national community. This effect was achieved not only by arguing that every single young person had a right to sport but also by suggesting that sport was crucial to society itself because it facilitated the transition to adulthood through its unique capacity for cultivating “character” and “community” among young people. If kids had a right to sport, on one hand, society also needed sport to socialize them, on the other. And there was more. In its broad, universalist defense of children and of sport as a means of appropriate socialization, Nike also set itself up as an alternative to the policing and punishment scenarios (what I described above in terms of containment and control) being played out elsewhere in the United States. In contrast to these divisive and particularist approaches, Cole wrote, the PLAY campaign presented itself as “a socially progressive program based upon a call for social and political unity around

children” (p. 384). PLAY offered, in other words, a broader, more inclusive (kinder, gentler) America—one that realized the rights of all American children regardless of superficial cultural differences such as race, class, gender, or religion and that unified these diverse social groups together through the grassroots, nonprofit organizations and agencies that compose the American sport delivery system.

The problem with this vision, according to C. L. Cole (1996, pp. 386-387), is that if much of its appeal derived from a claim to transcend race, class, and gender, it also depended on an implicit racial logic, one involving the close semantic connections between order and disorder, action and agency, and race that are embedded in the advertisements for the campaign. For when it came to African American youngsters, as Cole sees it, the ideas the PLAY campaign invoked shifted slightly but significantly. It was not so much that African American youth were overrepresented in the imaginary space created by this initiative (although it seems they were). It is rather that they were imagined as being particularly at risk for crime and violence and as such in dire need of sport and the discipline it can provide.

Whereas sport and physical activity are used to shore up America’s bourgeois fantasy of childhood fun and play for White middle-class youth, *sport and physical activity function to regulate, discipline, and police already deviant bodies in urban areas. . . .* In the context of urban America, sport is not about kid’s play and bodily movement but a moral and normative imperative. *Without sport . . . inner-city youths are at once at-risk . . . and the sites of danger.* Our attention is directed once again to crime, law and order, discipline, and their correlates: gangs, drugs, sports and Nike. (C. L. Cole, 1996, p. 386, italics added)

For mainstream America, then, African American young people do not so much have a right to sport as they have a need for sport; without it, or some equivalent social form, they are at-risk—not only to themselves but also to us. Thus, “PLAY appears to break from popular discourses on crime and seemingly shifts the terms of the popular dialogue on inner-city youth in the context of dominant ‘get-tough’ and ‘three-strikes’ approach[es].” In actuality, however, it only makes sense in relation to and in fact depends on these racialized discourses, this imagined sense of “what/who we understand to be America’s urban problems and *how race is made to matter and not matter in the national imagination* (C. L. Cole, 1996, p. 386, italics added).

All of this is most clearly revealed *not* in what the advertising campaign says, according to C. L. Cole (1996), but in what it does not say, in its absences and silences. “What if there were no sports?” the first PLAY spots famously asked. “What if there were no teams? What if there were no dreams?” Although the “what if” uneasiness underlying the campaign is presented in general, abstract terms, Cole insisted that there is a subtle racial subtext or threat of general disorder and social deterioration underlying it. This racial subtext is made clear, in Cole’s reading, in the way in which African American basketball star Michael Jordan is deployed in the advertisement. Jordan narrates the entire ad, including the questions that ask

“us” to envision ourselves and our society if there were no sports. But Jordan himself is pictured only in the advertisement’s closing sequence. This is not, according to Cole, incidental. The image of Michael Jordan—an athlete who despite all of his transcendental qualities and capacities is also a Black man—reminds us that there is a racial logic and threat underlying and justifying the PLAY movement. It reminds us, more specifically, that without sports, we would not only lose the chance for future Michael Jordans, but we would likely be left with all of the problems associated with Blackness and risk itself: gangs, crime, drugs, violence, and so forth. Thus, we are presented with not just a trope of innocence and guilt of unmet needs but a trope of danger, threat, and fear where race appears as central.¹³ “If we did not imagine [a Black man like Jordan] in the space of sport, where would we imagine him?” Cole asked, mimicking the ad (pp. 385-386). Who, I might add, would we imagine him to be?

It may be that C. L. Cole (1996) pushed her reading of Nike’s PLAY campaign a bit too hard. But the more general critical interpretative insights on which it is based certainly apply to our midnight basketball case, and in no more important way than with respect to the broader symbolic significance of sport in the racial culture of American society. Indeed, showing how racial codes and assumptions operate in Nike’s PLAY campaign is only part of the point for Cole. Her larger and more significant point is that the Nike campaign serves to support, sustain, reinforce, and legitimate racial discourses and practices in the culture at large. The argument here is both simpler and far more significant revolving around the presence of Michael Jordan, the most prominent athlete and adman of his generation, and the popularity of sport itself and the idealized, normative assumptions that surround it (see also Andrews, 2001).

It is not too much of a stretch to suggest that midnight basketball served a very similar function in American public culture, especially during the 1994 crime bill debates. That is to say, midnight basketball served as a symbolic means by which racial stereotypes about risk, fear, and crime were reinforced and legitimated, with different possibilities to be certain, but united around beliefs about the risk and nature of risk posed by African American young men. Here, that the programs were included in a crime bill rather than as some sort of social assistance package—social welfare broadly conceived—is definitely revealing. The implication is clear: The problems of the at-risk, inner-city youth were not about the problems they were having in American society but about the problems they created for Americans. Indeed, the fact that the debate over midnight basketball took place in the context of an extended national debate on what would become the nation’s largest crime bill in history may be the perfect illustration of Cole’s larger point with regard to the inverted racial assumptions underlying crime and sport in contemporary American culture.

That the crime bill legislation itself did not enact broad-ranging social initiatives is thus not the only problem with the legislative agenda enacted at the federal level in the 1990s. The problem is the symbolic message about

the nature of crime and its prevention. In the absence of real institutional resources and meaningful policy interventions, the symbolic function of midnight basketball may not only have been to legitimate racial ideologies and practices but also to obscure and disguise what Pitter and Andrews (1997) described as “the circumstances that impinge upon the agency and power of urban communities.” Here, we come to the core of the liberal-conservative consensus on race—the way in which it employs “indirect, inferential and covert policies that use the denial of overt racial intent to escape responsibility for racialized consequences” (p. 216). “It disguises as *racial* problems,” Lipsitz (1998) wrote,

the general social problems posed by deindustrialization, economic restructuring and neoconservative attacks on the welfare state. It fuels a discourse that demonizes people of color . . . while hiding the privileges of whiteness by attributing the economic advantages enjoyed by whites to their family values, faith in fatherhood and foresight. (p. 218)

RECREATION, RACIAL CONSENSUS, AND BEYOND

There are many questions about midnight basketball left to be answered. Many of them have to do with issues of implementation and effectiveness, especially in terms of the everyday operation and practice of ordinary, local midnight basketball leagues themselves. How, for instance, do the tensions I have described above play themselves out at the local level? Do these programs work? Is there any evidence of effectiveness? What affect does funding have on all of this? How are these programs understood and experienced by those who they are intended to serve? Is there any way out of or around those who want to avoid being caught in the racial consensus I have described?

But if there is one point that should be emphasized with respect to future research and policy formation, it is that the critical, theoretical framework I have put forward here contrasts dramatically with the understandings of many of the league organizers and participants I have met and interacted with over the course of my fieldwork. For those who are actively involved in such leagues on a day-to-day (or rather evening-to-evening) basis, there is very little talk about race and politics and policies of social intervention. Their emphasis is on basketball itself. (This is much as it is for many African American popular cultural practices; see Kelley, 1997.) Alternatively, perhaps what is most conspicuous by its absence from mainstream, political discourses about midnight basketball is any consideration of what makes basketball a meaningful and enticing activity for young African American men is the opportunity for sport and recreation itself. The absence of any public discourse about sport for its own sake among inner-city African American young men takes on additional significance in the context of cuts in public parks and recreation departments, especially the elimination of basketball courts and other public spaces that are seen as magnets and breeding spaces for crime, deviance, and undelinquency. Unsupervised play

among young African American men, it would seem, is not only undesirable, it is also inherently dangerous. Perhaps I have gone too far here. But it is interesting to consider the implication that policy makers, politicians, community activists, and everyone else have absolutely no interest in the extent to which the game of basketball may supply a much-needed source of meaning, creativity, and accomplishment in a world that gives them very little pleasure otherwise.

NOTES

1. This question served as the monograph to James's (1963/1983) masterful, autobiographical study of cricket in the West Indies, *Beyond a Boundary*, a work whose contributions to theories of race and sport I have explored in some detail elsewhere (Hartmann, 2001).
2. In Chicago, I had some peripheral involvement with the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA's) original midnight basketball project while working for the Institute for Athletics and Education (IAE) at the University of Chicago. As stipulated by the CHA's official U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) proposal, the IAE served as a consultant to the initiative (Kpo, 1990, p. 8); in my capacity as research coordinator for the institute, I reviewed CHA plans for the program, participated in discussions about it, and prepared a memo summarizing the IAE position (which was supportive but not entirely favorable). Several years later, while a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego, I worked with Professor Hugh Mehan in preparing an external evaluation of the sanctioned midnight basketball program run in southeast San Diego by a Christian-based outreach organization called High Five America. My role in this context consisted primarily of conducting intake interviews with program participants and writing field notes of my observations of the everyday operation of the program. Finally, once I arrived in the Twin Cities (with a teaching job in the sociology department at the University of Minnesota), I got involved with a nonsanctioned basketball-based program called Stay Alive. Sponsored by the city of Minneapolis's Department of Health and Family Support, Stay Alive operated in conjunction with local Native American and African American organizations in majority-minority neighborhoods. By far the most extensive and intensive of my experiences (involving a small team of students from the university), my involvement with this Minneapolis program involved formal consulting, program evaluation, and daily interaction with the program.
3. See also Chalip and Johnson (1996). For a more general theoretical statement of the organization of sport as a social system, see Bourdieu (1978, 1988).
4. Exact numbers for this trend have not yet been produced, but the work of Crompton and his colleagues (Crompton & McGregor, 1994; Crompton & Wicks, 1988) gives us some sense of the trend. Indeed, reliance on external resources had almost already doubled in the earliest years of this period (from 14% in 1974-1975 to 24% in 1987-1988).
5. Cover letter and proposal submitted to the HUD Secretary's Fund, dated October 13, 1989. I have only been able to find one reference to sport, recreation, or physical fitness in the documents I have assembled on these original initiatives. It came in the media packet originally compiled and released by Standifer's league as it was trying to expand, but it was only one of a dozen reasons midnight basketball programs were touted to be effective and was an ambiguous point at that. It read as follows: "The mandatory use of all players in each game and required man-to-man defense insures a high degree of participation and physical activity." That is to say, even here, physical activity seems to be as much about occupying the time and

- energy of young men as it is about providing them with legitimate athletic opportunities (Midnight Basketball League, Inc. media packet: "The Alternative").
6. Such claims have been a common feature of the problems-based recreation industry. The Police Athletic League in Goowin, Arizona, for example, claimed that juvenile arrests dropped 16.1%, and juveniles were 43.9% less likely to be victims; in Cincinnati, a recreation-based program was said to have resulted in a 31% reduction in crime incidence; Fort Myers, Florida, apparently witnessed a 27% drop in crime with its STARS outreach program; a Kansas City, Missouri, program claimed a 25% reduction in crime; and Forth Worth, Texas, asserted a 28% drop within 1 mile radius of the program site. All of these, as Witt and Crompton (1997b) pointed out, were lacking in scientific comparisons and/or controls. This is not surprising: Despite their prominence and popularity, sport and recreation programs ranging from boot camps to after-school programs in general have received little analysis until recently. For example, the most comprehensive survey of the social scientific literature on crime prevention (Sherman et al., 1998) listed only one scholarly study that focuses explicitly on recreation-based programs, and even its findings about community-based after-school recreation programs are limited and inconclusive at best. In this respect, it will be important to see the results of the study of 621 at-risk prevention recreation programs launched several years ago by Witt and Crompton (1996).
 7. Gallup Organization telephone survey of 1,011 respondents in a national adult sample conducted for CNN and *USA Today*. Survey date August 16, 1994; release date August 19, 1994.
 8. The formal ideology that provided the impetus and blueprint for Reagan's new federalism, for its part, was articulated most famously in Charles Murray's *Losing Ground* (1984). According to Murray, Reagan's policy was driven not only by its cost-cutting per se but also and perhaps more fundamentally by its argument that the problems of the urban underclass were the result of excessive reliance on public support itself. In this view, public assistance had stripped these Americans of a work ethic, personal responsibility, and sense of connection to the larger community. Reformers in the Reaganite mode thus believed that public policy not only needed to limit or eliminate public funding to inner-city populations but also to rebuild communities and social ties from the ground up—and that this (conveniently) could only be accomplished through grassroots, community-based initiatives and private enterprises.
 9. These three ideas or approaches were not explicitly specified and articulated by midnight basketball practitioners or proponents as such. Rather, I have extracted them out of my reading and analysis of the various documents and programs that constitute the empirical foundations on which this study is based. That having been said, I can say that the 12 core objectives and rationales enumerated in Standifer's original midnight basketball framework can be easily reduced to the three categories I am putting forward.
 10. Proclamation 6269 of April 12, 1991 (56 FR 15481). Transcript of presidential remarks "Points of Light National Celebration of Community Service" for April 17, 1991.
 11. I read this article as the culmination of a series of articles Cole and her coauthors produced exploring the ways in which racial difference and deviance are constructed in and through sport media. (See C. L. Cole & Andrews, 1996; C. L. Cole & Denny, 1994).
 12. The crisis I am referring to here is not the one about the exploitation of third-world labor Nike has grappled with in most recent years. The crisis of the early 1990s was brought on by three developments, according to C. L. Cole (1996): public outrage about youth "sneaker crimes," Operation Push's proposed boycott of the company, and the backlash against Spike Lee's "racial tolerance" ads. One could easily see it

as even more self-serving than this, in my view—that is, as part of a deliberate strategy to nurture and expand consumer demand for athletic footwear. After all, everyone who plays sports needs shoes to play in, and declining sports participation rates among youth and adolescents at the time posed a serious concern for everyone in the sports apparel industry.

13. For a powerful journalistic exploration aimed at reclaiming the innocence and inherent meaning of the lives of inner-city children of color, see Kozol (2000).

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THE STICKY SITUATION OF SPORTSMANSHIP

Contexts and Contradictions in Sportsmanship Among High School Boys Basketball Players

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This article makes a substantive contribution to our understanding of youth and sport participation by exploring the interrelated ways in which situational contexts influence sportsmanship in competitive high school boys basketball. The author uses ethnographic data gathered while he was an assistant coach of boys varsity basketball, at a predominantly African American high school, and a social constructionist approach to demonstrate how players and coaches mediate notions of sportsmanship through the contexts of the game, coaches' philosophy regarding player conduct, and the everyday social reality of the athletes. The players' use of contexts to define appropriate sportsmanlike behavior creates a dilemma or "sticky situation" in which the young men must weigh the often-contradictory goals of winning against shifting definitions of sportsmanship. The author discusses the implications of the complex nature of sportsmanship and competitive youth sport.

Many observers of sport have noted that notions of fair play and sportsmanship are being challenged by an increased emphasis on "winning-at-all-costs" (see, e.g., Bockrath & Franke, 1995; Grough, 1997; Papp & Prisztoka, 1995; Pilz, 1995). Not only has winning become the "all consuming goal" of participants, but it has also become the standard by which athletes and coaches are consistently "judged" (Eitzen, 1988, p. 28). Given sport participants' fear of negative evaluations by others, the pressure to win at all costs "pervades sport at every level and leads to cheating by coaches and athletes" (Eitzen, 1999, p. 52, emphasis added). Youth sport, especially high school athletics, has become increasingly consumed by an attitude of winning with little regard for sportsmanship (Ramsey & Rank, 1997). Although researchers have attributed this disintegration of sportsmanship to the competitive context of traditional sport itself (Knoppers, Meyers, & Zuidema, 1989; Shields, Bredemeier, Gardner, & Bostrom, 1995; Wandzilak, Carroll, & Ansorge, 1988), the professionalization of coaches and the pressure on them to win (Shields et al, 1995), and the "big business" of winning (Volkwein, 1995), they have given little consideration to how athletes and coaches alike mediate notions of sportsmanship through the interrelated contexts of the game, coaching style, and the everyday reality of the participants. The popularity of competitive youth

sport compels us to consider how these interrelated contexts influence sportsmanship.

This article makes a substantive contribution to our understanding of youth and their sport participation by exploring the interrelated ways in which situational contexts influence sportsmanship in competitive high school boys basketball. I use ethnographic data gathered as an assistant coach of varsity high school boys basketball to demonstrate how players and coaches mediate notions of sportsmanship through the contexts of the game, coaches' philosophy regarding player conduct, and the everyday social reality of the athletes. I analyze the data using a social constructionist perspective that takes as its starting point that individuals define the meaning of objects through interaction with others (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Cooley, 1934/1961; Mead, 1934/1961). The players' use of contexts—in particular, experiences from where they live and play—to define appropriate sportsmanlike behavior creates a dilemma, or “sticky situation,” in which the young men must weigh the often-contradictory goals of winning against shifting definitions of sportsmanship. Although many other factors—including psychological factors—might also influence whether players perform like sportsmen, this article is only concerned with the impact of social situations on individual conduct. I conclude that questions regarding the decline of sportsmanship in youth sport must be answered by examining how contexts influence behavior.

In the following discussion, sportsmanship is characterized by notions of civility and is “a matter of being good (character) and doing right (action) in sports” (Grough, 1997, p. 21). Sportsmanlike behavior consists of “positive interaction with teammates, officials, coaches and opponents” including “providing verbal and/or nonverbal support, encouragement or praise, shaking hands, assisting someone who ha[s] fallen, or saying ‘nice shot’ or ‘nice play’” (Wandzilak et al., 1988, p. 15). Conversely, unsportsmanlike behaviors are “negative social interactions” including “arguing, retaliating, abusive language, and fighting or demonstrating displeasure with an official, opponent, teammate, or coach” (Wandzilak et al, 1988, p. 15). This dichotomous definition of sportsmanship is given a range of meaning through athletes' interaction with one another and the interrelated contexts in which these interactions occur.

INTROSPECTIVE COACH

I gathered data for this article during 2 years of participant observation at Northeast High School in Georgia (pseudonyms are used for the names of places and people). From the summer of 1998 to the spring of 2000, I volunteered as an assistant varsity boys basketball coach to the head coach William Benson. Both of us are African American. Prior to that, I spent 2 years as a volunteer coach for the girls basketball team at Northeast and therefore have observed the entire basketball program for 4 years. During my time in the field, I took an active “membership role”—one in which the researcher participates in the core activities of other members (Adler &

Adler, 1987, p. 34). My role as assistant coach allowed me to focus directly on the relationship between myself and the male athletes, regarding a broad range of topics. As Adler and Adler (1987) suggested, such an approach means that my own “perspectives, experiences, and emotions become equally important to the accounts gathered from others, instead of serving as an important, but secondary, enhancement” to those accounts (p. 34).

Consistent with the membership role approach, I also emphasize reflexivity in this postfield analysis of the data. Reflexivity is the process by which ethnographers recognize that they are “part-and-parcel of the setting, context, and culture they are trying to understand and represent” (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 486). This reflexive approach, used in other ethnographies of sport, has proven to be a viable means for understanding the social dynamics of athletics (see, e.g., Adler & Adler, 1990; Fine, 1987; Schacht, 1996; Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997).

For two full basketball seasons, I worked with the Northeast Knights. Basketball season started in mid October and ended in late February. During that time, I met with the boys for practices and games for approximately 25 hours a week. I routinely recorded my observations immediately following practices and games, although our late-night returns from games occasionally made it difficult for me to record notes that evening. In such instances, I recalled my observations from memory the next morning and recorded them. In addition to recording observations during the season, I took field notes of players’ behavior during summer basketball camps and their informal interactions with other students at Northeast High School. The collected field notes were then coded for thematic categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1984), one of which was the constant contradiction between ideals of sportsmanship and winning.

PLACES AND PEOPLE

NORTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL

Northeast High School is located in a metropolitan area and has approximately 1,600 students (59% Black, 40% White, and 1% other). Although the school is located near one of the poorest areas of Northeast, there is socioeconomic diversity among the students. About one third of the school population has a family income at or below the poverty level—according to 1999 figures, a family of four with a total income less than \$17,029 is considered below poverty (Weinburg, 2000). Most of these families are African American and reside in the Flat Shoals, Hillside, and East Ridge low-income-housing developments located within a 3- to 5-block radius of Northeast High School. The other two thirds of the student body are from working-class to upper-middle-class Black and White communities in Northeast. Such diversity in the student body also produces diversity in post-high school education. For instance, approximately 51% of the students entering as freshman receive their high school diploma within 4 years.¹ Sixty percent

of these graduates go on to 4-year colleges and universities (1% attend Ivy League schools), whereas 5% attend 2-year community colleges. A small percentage of those students who drop out go on to obtain their general equivalency diploma (GED).

Aside from the occasional fight between a few students, the school remains a safe place to learn. Perhaps this safe environment has been maintained through the presence of two full-time armed police officers and several surveillance cameras installed throughout the school in the late 1980s. Still, there are disciplinary problems. These problems mainly involve truancy and prank bomb threats. In the past year alone, there were six bomb threats telephoned to the school's main office. These threats raised much concern among Northeast's students, teachers, and parents in light of the Columbine, Colorado, school massacre.² At Northeast, one student who had been responsible for several bomb threats was eventually apprehended and sent to an alternative school—where violators of the school code of discipline are taught classes while being heavily monitored.

Many students participate in or are supportive of Northeast's extracurricula, academic and sports programs. These programs are well established and provide a source of pride for the Northeast community. For instance, Northeast's chess teams have won Georgia regional, state, and national competitions; its academic teams have been ranked in the top five in the state; and its mock trial teams have won national awards. The sports programs also have been among the best in the state and the nation. The girls basketball team recently won a state subregion competition, wrestling and girls volleyball teams have won state regional championships, the football team has won state championships, and the boys soccer team has won state and national championships. Given these academic and athletic successes, it is with great pride that Northeast touts itself as the "School of Champions."

NORTHEAST KNIGHTS BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM

The notoriety of the school for its athletic success is in no small part due to the accomplishments of the boys basketball program. Under the direction of Head Coach William Benson, who began coaching at Northeast in 1987, the team has averaged 20 wins per season in the 1990s and has regularly been in the top 10 of the Georgia Coaches' Poll. In addition, the Northeast Knights have won several state region championships, played in postseason tournaments each of the past 5 years, and twice been to the State Tournament "Elite Eight."

Coach Benson and the Knights have had this success while breaking from normative standards in high school basketball. For instance, most high school varsity teams cut their rosters down from large numbers to 12 to 15 players using a number of conditioning or exercise drills during preseason tryouts. Coach Benson, on the other hand, holds no tryouts and refuses to cut any players from the Knight's varsity roster. In fact, he welcomes all players

who think they can contribute to the basketball program. His philosophy is simple:

I never liked the idea of getting rid of a kid just because he couldn't keep up in running drills. You never know what kind of player the kid will be and you run them off. Besides we have room for everyone in our program. If they wanna play we'll find a way to dress them.

During the first few weeks of practice, most players choose to quit the team after they have compared their own basketball skills with other players' and realize that there will be limited opportunity for playing time. Still, the end result of a no-cut policy is that the varsity team dresses between 20 and 25 players for every game. In fact, in the 1999-2000 season, Coach Benson had 28 players on the team and rotated the last 5 players on the roster so that they each had an opportunity to dress for at least three games.

The notion of an "army" of Knights can be intimidating to opposing teams. Opposing coaches and players alike made remarks like, "Man it's a lot of y'all," "Y'all play all of them . . . that's an army," or "Y'all look more like a football team than a basketball team." Perhaps more intimidating to opposing teams than the number of players in uniform is the way the players enter the game. Unlike most coaches who substitute 1 or 2 players at a time, Coach Benson divides his 20 players into four units and then substitutes players 5 at a time. He allows each unit to play in the game for 2 minutes. They are expected to play hard, apply pressure defense, and shoot at every opportunity. This creates a frantic game pace for opponents. The advantage of using such an approach is that the frequent substitution of players playing an up-tempo style has a cumulative effect on an opposing team. Teams, even those with better players than the Knights, become the victims of fatigue and ultimately make mistakes that help give Northeast the victory.

COACH BENSON

When I first watched the boys basketball team play, I was intrigued by their unorthodox substitution patterns and the large number of players Coach Benson kept on his team. After joining the team, I learned that Coach Benson's style was rooted in his own experiences as an athlete, a native of Northeast, and an African American man. Coach Benson grew up right near the Flat Shoals housing project two blocks from the high school and played basketball at Northeast under the guidance of legendary coach Paul Carson—a very successful coach and the first African American to coach at Northeast, which was segregated until 1972.

Northeast was formed when all-Black Harriston High School was combined with all-White Tuxton High School and renamed Northeast. The desegregation of Northeast, like that occurring at most of America's public schools during the 1970s, meant that coaches and players had to now consider race more prominently in their everyday lives. Although Northeast

was racially mixed, the basketball team was predominantly African American. This meant that Northeast players continued to confront racial hostility when they played against high schools with all-White teams. Such racial hostility, especially in the southern states, profoundly shaped the lives of people like Coach Benson. As an African American, he was constantly confronted with the realities of inequality based on race. Like other African Americans, he learned to live with it and to keep striving.

While at Northeast, as a player, Coach Benson was little more than a role player for Coach Carson. Benson once remarked about his playing days at Northeast, “I always felt that I didn’t always get the opportunity to show what I could do.” After graduating from Northeast High School, Coach Benson went on to play college basketball at Taylor-Smith College, an historically Black college, where he started as a freshman. Coach Benson had a successful college career—his college team competed for conference championships, and he received MVP honors. After graduation, Coach Benson attended Capel State University, another historically Black college, where he earned a master’s degree. Two years later, he landed back at Taylor-Smith as a coach and led the team to a conference championship. He later returned to Northeast High School to be closer to his family and to take over the program after Paul Carson’s death. It was having the opportunity to play at Taylor-Smith that helped Coach Benson develop his philosophy about giving players an opportunity to play. He said,

At Taylor-Smith I got a chance to grow as a player. I learned that players need an opportunity to grow. That’s one of the reasons I don’t cut players. Instead I try to put players in a position to be successful.

Coach Benson’s no-cut policy was well received by most players who enjoyed the opportunity to spend time with a large group of teammates. Many parents, however, considered the no-cut policy as a hindrance to a successful basketball program. These parents were usually more concerned with their son’s individual needs rather than the collective needs of the team. They complained that with so many players, their son was unable to get the necessary playing time to demonstrate his ability to college coaches. Although parents had complained to administrators about Coach Benson’s no-cut policy, he continued to receive support from school administrators for having both a winning program and a positive community influence.

THE COMMUNITY

There is another reason that Coach Benson has a no-cut policy. He views sport as a character-building activity for young men and feels it is his responsibility as a community leader to “service” as many kids as he can. Because the majority of the players that play for Northeast hail from either Flat Shoals, Hillside, or East Ridge housing developments, Coach Benson said,

I feel I need to give them something to do 'cause when they are with us then they're not doing stuff they're not supposed to be doing. Otherwise they'll be hanging with drug dealers or just messing around and gettin' in trouble.

Flat Shoals, Hillside, and East Ridge were built in the early 1940s as affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families. Today, these housing developments continue to be homes for low-income families, primarily African Americans in Northeast, but because of concentrated poverty and other structural factors, there has been an increase in crime, drug use, and social disorganization in these residential areas. Of the 28 players from the 1999-2000 team, 16 were from these neighboring housing developments, 9 from nearby working-class communities, and 3 from affluent neighborhoods. With the exception of 1 player, all of the players were African American.

The social conditions of Flat Shoals, Hillside, and East Ridge housing developments offer a formidable opponent to enjoying the innocence of youth. Many of the players live near drug houses—neighborhood homes in which the selling of crack cocaine is the primary function of the home—or on blocks where gun play and violence occur often. In fact, over the past decade, four of Coach Benson's former players from these neighborhoods were murdered; two were shot, and two stabbed to death. Although these players were killed after they were no longer playing basketball for Coach Benson, their murders had a profound affect on Coach Benson. The most recent death of a player occurred in 1997 when Thomas Thurmon, at that time a junior on the boys basketball team, was shot to death while riding in a friend's car. A day later, the shooter, 22-year-old Phillip Winston, turned himself in to police and admitted killing Thurmon in self-defense. Winston, in his statement to the police, said that Thurmon resembled someone who had threatened to kill him. Thurmon's murder had been a case of mistaken identity.

Although the entire school mourned Thurmon's death, many of the players recognized his death as just a reminder that they live in a high-risk environment. Their community is one where survival is based on one's ability to compete against the constant allure of fast money obtained through drugs and crime and where one must be confident, aggressive, and above all else willing to fight in any way necessary to survive. Those former players who have internalized this confidence and aggression and channeled it into mainstream activities have met with success. Many of Coach Benson's players have attended college and started successful careers. These former players remain a source of encouragement to Coach Benson, who believes in trying to help the many youth of Flat Shoals, Hillside, and East Ridge who face difficult odds.

THE PLAYING FIELD

Against the backdrop of the "rough areas" in which the Northeast players grow up are the suburban schools where the Northeast Knights must go to compete. Because Northeast is one of only two large high schools in the Northeast community, the Knights must travel to Wilmington County

to compete with other schools of its size. These schools are newly built—less than 15 years old—and located in mostly White middle- to upper-middle-class communities in Wilmington County. For instance, Western High, a Wilmington County school, is located across the street from family dwellings valued at \$300,000. For the most part, all 10 schools that compete in Northeast's basketball region share these socioeconomic characteristics. Not only are the players from the Wilmington County schools of a higher socioeconomic class than most of the Northeast players, but they are also predominantly White. In fact, only 1 of the 10 schools in Wilmington County has more than two African American players on their entire boys varsity basketball team.

Such socioeconomic and racial differences enhance the already competitive spirit of the contests between Northeast and Wilmington County schools. When I first joined the team and attended several practices, I kept hearing Coach Benson admonish his players for not practicing hard despite the already overwhelming physical nature of the practice drills. I failed to understand why Coach Benson would badger his players to be so aggressive in practice. There was excessive physical contact—like elbows to the face and hard slaps on the wrist. This same behavior would rarely be tolerated by most referees in games. Coach Benson would sum up his admonishments by saying, “You and I know that you are not going to get any calls when you go to Wilmington County. You better be ready to take a beating and keep on playing.” Older players, having played in Wilmington County previously, also acknowledged what they perceived to be unfair play and officiating when they played at Wilmington County high schools. “It's rough in Wilmington County. They really give you cheap shots. You gotta get a big lead because the referees will try to give the game to the home team. Nothing but a lot of home cookin.’”

I perceived much of what Coach Benson and the players were saying about Wilmington County as overblown statements about an opponent that the players and coach despised. Yet, on my first trip to Wilmington County, I immediately got a sense of the biased officiating and the unregulated rough play about which the players and Coach Benson had complained. Even after that first game, I tried to maintain an objective position regarding officiating, but it seemed that every time we played in Wilmington County, there was systematic unfair treatment. In addition to the referees' and opposing players' behavior, the fans at these schools were hostile. Several times during the season, the fans would shout obscenities at our players. Some fans, as we entered the gymnasium, would make racist comments like, “Look at the little Black monkeys,” or “Here comes that gang of Niggers.” These fans were rarely reprimanded because Coach Benson spent little energy, during game time, trying to identify the offenders to school officials, who, in Coach Benson's eyes, probably shared the fans' sentiments. In some cases, however, the offending fans were identified by school security and removed from the gymnasium.

It was in watching the players “battle” in Wilmington County, survive everyday threats of aggression at home, and accept Coach Benson’s emphasis on winning that I became aware of the ways in which these contexts created contradictions for the players who had to determine when sportsman-like behavior was appropriate.

CONTEXTS AND SPORTSMANSHIP

In the discussion below, I present lengthy narratives from my field notes. These narratives demonstrate the influence of contexts on players’ behavior with regard to sportsmanship.

COACH’S EXPECTATIONS

The professionalization of high school sports has created a market for coaches who emphasize winning. School administrators, fans, and parents expect players and coaches alike to put forth every effort to win (Eitzen, 1988). Those coaches who survive the frequent hiring and firing of their colleagues have embraced the competitive spirit and have been able to motivate their players to victory. Coach Benson is one such coach. He often conveys his attitude about winning through recollections of his own personal experience. These recollections are important because they undergird his attitude about competing and help players develop a collective will focused on winning. Coach Benson’s use of such recollections was a frequent occurrence during the team’s pregame Saturday morning meetings. For example, he talked about his past experiences prior to our game with Willow Brook High School in Wilmington County:

We had just finished our morning shoot around and began to eat donuts and juice. Coach Benson called the team over to the bleachers and began talking generally about success and winning. He then said, “You see gentlemen, when you win all kind of things come your way. Everyone wants to be involved with a winner. See some of these girls y’all chasing right now will come running to you when you win and keep winning.” The players laughed as Coach Benson continued, “That ain’t the only thing. I remember when I was in college our basketball team was doing well. People would want to take you out to dinner and treat you. We used to go to the parties and get in free because we had established a reputation as winners. We’d be coming in the party and all the ladies would look at you and try to figure out how they can get to know you. So gentleman winning will get you things and take you places you haven’t even thought about.”

Coach Benson emphasized winning by stressing the kinds of things to which his players could relate. He used his recollections to convey expectations of victory and to build a collective consciousness of the benefits of winning. Following the team’s victory against Willow Brook, postgame events allowed Coach Benson to further convey his sentiment about winning with an added humorous twist:

After we won the game we stopped at McDonalds in Wilmington County. While we were eating three teenaged girls (all white) came in the restaurant. The girls were heavy and busty. They walked back to the rest rooms. As soon as the players saw the young ladies enter they called out to one of the players on the team, "Hey Capleton. It's some girls in here you like." Even though Capleton is tall and slim he likes "heavy girls." Anyway Capleton walked to the back of the restaurant and started talking to them in his flarey way. The rest of the team was looking from afar and making wisecracks like, "Capleton. Get'em Capleton." The girls walked out of the back of the restaurant and Capleton followed them. Everyone was laughing and joking because he was flirting with the girls pretty hard. Coach Benson even said, "Ain't a fat girl safe in this country with Capleton around."

While we loaded up the bus Capleton was still out in the parking lot talking to the girls. We finally got him on the bus and the driver pulled out of the driveway. The girls pulled in behind the bus and flashed their headlights. The bus driver pulled out and the girls followed us through the first turn. When we got on the expressway for our 50 minute drive back to Northeast the girls continued following us. Coach Benson joked, "If they follow us all the way to Northeast we goin' have to call the police 'cause them girls are crazy."

The girls followed the bus for about 25 minutes and the guys kept shouting, "They're following us." Suddenly the girls pulled their car along side of the bus and turned on the interior light in their car. All three of them were in their bras. The players got extra loud and started shouting and pointing out the window. The girls got back behind the bus again. A few minutes later they pulled back along side the bus and cut the interior light on. This time the girls had taken off their bras and were showing their naked breast. The guys really started hooting up then. Finally, the girls got behind us again, flashed there lights and then turned off at an exit. As the guys were laughing Coach Benson asked the bus driver to turn on the interior light so that he could make an announcement. When the driver turned on the light Coach Benson shouted, "Hey, Hey. Listen." The players quieted down as Coach Benson said, "Now see that's the kind of stuff that comes with winning." Everyone on the bus laughed because they recalled Coach Benson's morning talk about winning.

Coach Benson also conveyed his sentiment for winning by occasionally paraphrasing the words of famous sports figures such as Vince Lombardi: "Like Vince Lombardi used to say, winning is not the most important thing, its the only thing." Although Coach Benson's emphasis on winning may contradict his other explicitly stated goals of serving young men through athletics, winning remained the priority, as evident in some of his talk: "I don't care if it's 5 people out there on the floor in wheelchairs, you play to win." "If its old folks from the nursing home and they step between these lines then they're going to get their ass beat." "When people ask me when is your next big game, I tell them every game is a big game for us. I'm trying to win all the games. Losing one is losing one too many." And, "You gotta do what it takes to win."

Coach Benson's "You gotta do what it takes to win" attitude was not lost on the players, who put forth every effort to aggressively compete. The result was that players occasionally violated implicit and explicit standards

of sportsmanship by “throwing an elbow,” “talking trash,” or giving their opponents a gratuitous “push” under the basket. It was Coach Benson’s leadership style that helped create a moral atmosphere in which players compromise levels of sportsmanship for victory. As Shields et al. (1995) have observed, the “moral atmosphere plays a significant role in mediating moral action in sport, and peers and the coach all play a prominent role in shaping the teams’ collective norms” regarding fair play (p. 326). Although Coach Benson’s attitude contributed to his players’ sportsmanship transgressions, his responses to his players’ behavior were at times contradictory. For instance, one moment he might tell a player to knock an opponent “the fuck over if he is in your way.” The next moment, he might admonish the same player for aggressive unsportsmanlike conduct that he himself previously encouraged. This mixed response meant that players were confronted with the sticky situation of choosing the appropriate behavior within the context of the game.

THE GAME

According to sport sociologist Stanley Eitzen (1988), “Sport is not a pristine activity in a utopia but rather one that occurs in a society where only the fittest survive” (p. 19). This suggests that the broader social context in which sports are played influences individuals’ orientation toward sport. In America, the competitive atmosphere of everyday life has had a trickle-down effect on high school athletics. No longer are high school sports viewed solely as a means of providing extracurricular activities for students, but rather they are considered, among other things, a means of generating income for the school, building school spirit, and producing competitive athletes for the college and professional ranks. These additional functions give added social pressure for high school athletics to be competitive.

Beyond the added social pressure to be competitive, high school sports, like basketball, are competitive in and of themselves. In basketball, there are five players from each team working to score as many baskets as possible while preventing the opposing team from scoring. Basketball coaches and players both use phrases like the “battle on the boards,” “attacking the defense,” or “pressuring the offense” to convey the combative nature of the sport. It is in the flow of competition or “the heat of battle” that questions of sportsmanship arise. Players on the Northeast Knights, like many other high school athletes, are challenged to maintain the ideal of appropriate sportsmanlike decorum as they compete. Game tension, however, can erode this ideal. For instance, one added tension for the Northeast Knights during my study was playing games in Wilmington County, where racial tension becomes the backdrop for competing. The field notes below narrate Northeast’s game against Missionary High School in Wilmington County. It demonstrates how both the players’ and coaches’ attitudes and behavior about sportsmanship were affected by the context of playing in Wilmington County.

The game started well for us. We went up 14-9. Missionary's strategy was to match our platoon of players with a platoon of their own. Each time we substituted all 5 players off the floor they did the same. But instead of playing 20 guys last night, Coach Benson decided that he would play a low possessions game. He brought back most of the starters for the 2nd quarter and we held the ball in our triangle offense and scored. Then we ran a spread offense for 2 minutes and the referee decided to call a traveling violation on Capleton (This was a good call in my judgement. It was one of a few made by the officiating crew—composed of one African American and two white officials. I normally don't complain about officiating but it seemed that the officials tried to do us in for real. Anything I say about the referees for this game can be substantiated on video tape.)

On the last play of the half Richard, one of our players, was shooting a jumpshot with five seconds left but was blatantly fouled. The defender grabbed his arm and pulled him to the ground so that he couldn't get the shot off, but the officials made no call. The ball was loose on the floor and Sweet Pea, another one of our players, picked it up and hit the jump shot to end the half. We were up 6 points.

After coach Benson talked to the players for about two minutes at half time we came back out to warm up. When we came out there were no balls available for warm up. I finally got the assistant coach (who was white) to give us some balls. As he gave them to me to give to our players he said, "Just make sure your boys return our balls to the rack."

"They did the last time," I said.

"They had about 8 balls and didn't return them," he said.

"No they didn't have 8 balls. They had 4 and I'm the one that got them the first time. Is there a problem?" I asked.

The assistant coach rolled his eyes as he pulled the ball rack to the side. I asked, "Is that how you treat your guest?" He rolled his eyes again and I walked away with the balls. At the end of the half I made sure that each of our guys that had balls went and returned the balls to him. (He seemed to be insinuating that our players would steal balls from the Missionary gymnasium. I was disturbed by this.)

After the half we came out ready to play. The officials, however, made a number of questionable calls against our players. You could see our players becoming more frustrated by the biased officiating. But how could you blame the players. (Self control is subjective. I too was becoming frustrated. I wanted to verbally assault the referees on several occasions. I had to work hard to maintain my cool.) The African American official, called a foul on Lewis, one of our players, and Capleton mumbled disagreement to himself. At that time one of the white officials overheard Capleton and gave him a technical foul for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Within that same play Reginald, another one of our players, came and told me that the other white referee told him, "You better simmer down Boy." (His use of the term "Boy" conjured up the racial prejudice of the "old south".)³ Missionary was given free throws and the ball back. Two minutes later the referees called a traveling violation on Richard. Richard was visibly frustrated. He walked over to the referee and handed him the ball. (Coach Benson, as part of his emphasis on sportsmanship, always instructs the players to just walk over and give the officials the basketball once a call has been made.) His motion was innocent at first and then right at the end of giving the official the ball he gave an ever so slight extra nudge to the ball. The official gave him a technical foul for unsportsmanlike conduct. Richard asked, "What did I do?" While the official went to the scorers table to give the technical foul coach Benson went over and talked to the official. At that time I pulled Richard and the rest of the players to

the side and told them to get their heads back in the game. I added to Richard, "You did push the ball at the ref and if I had been you I probably would have slung the thing into his face." The players laughed. This seemed to relax the team. The third quarter ended and the game was tied at 40.

In the fourth quarter the game was a see-saw battle until we started running our spread offense (a long series of deliberate passing and cutting). We scored a few baskets and went up. The entire time we ran our spread offense the Missionary fans kept shouting "Play fuckin' ball." They booed us for holding the ball. In fact, when they started shouting obscenities I saw a couple with a young child get up and leave the game. With 8 seconds left we had a three point lead and Missionary got the ball and pushed it up the court and tried to hit a three point basket. After the shot was missed Capleton slapped the ball out. Missionary called a time out with 3.4 seconds left on the clock. The officials adjusted the time to 5 seconds. This was another highly frustrating occurrence. Missionary inbounded the ball but couldn't score.

After the game we had to usher players into the locker room because the Missionary crowd was hostile. When we got in the locker room I told Coach Benson, "I was so upset with the way the officials called the game, I wanted to fight one of the referees." Coach Benson said, "I'm telling you. The way they called the game will make you loose your religion out here." We huddled up in the locker room and I said to the team, "That's the way you go into a hostile environment and kick some tail." We then chanted, "Knights."

After we finished T.J. said, "Coach May, tail? tail? We fuckin' kicked some ass." I just smiled at him as the rest of the players laughed.

As we were leaving the locker room there were still some of Missionary's fans in the gym hanging around and they kept talking trash to our players. Coach Benson came out of the locker room and told the players, "Go to the bus, 'cause tonight is my night to smack the shit outta somebody. Y'all do it another night 'cause I'm smacking the shit outta somebody tonight if they wanna talk." Coach Benson kept telling our team to get on the bus. We got all the boys on the bus. Of course when they got on the bus they pulled down the windows and yelled stuff at the fans like, "You a faggot, I'll beat your punk ass." I pushed the windows up from the outside. At the same time Coach Benson was at the front of the bus yelling to the opposing fans, "Where are all the j.v. Players? Hey j.v. players y'all come up to the Mc Donald's up the road. I'm buying all of y'all a fuckin' happy meal. They got a j.v. Special. It's a fuckin' happy meal." He got on the bus and we went on to McDonalds.

The context of playing Missionary in their own gymnasium was layered with many factors that affected the conduct of the players and coaches alike. First, the players and coaches had developed a collective memory of playing schools like Missionary in Wilmington County. This collective memory was based on the notion that officials of the games in Wilmington County had given unfair treatment to the Northeast Knights because of the racial prejudice held by officials, fans, and teams from Wilmington County. These feelings had been borne out many times at other Wilmington County schools (players readily recalled being called "nigger" and "boy" at Wilmington County games. At one Wilmington County school, the Knights had even been instructed to dress in a janitorial closet underneath the bleachers even though there was a locker room available). Thus, players and coaches had a higher level of awareness for inaccurate officiating. They were poised to interpret such officiating as racially biased.⁴

Second, Coach Benson's own behavior was inconsistent with the emphasis he himself places on sportsmanship. He derided the other team and its players, and his behavior provided another challenge to notions of sportsmanship for the players. Finally, the fans' hostility created a perceived threat to the players. The players responded to this threat using their repertoire of defensive strategies that they have developed in the context of their own community environment—an environment that poses challenges to everyday survival. This community context helps the players frame their behavior in sports.

THE COMMUNITY INFLUENCE

As discussed previously, the majority of players on the Northeast basketball team are from the Flat Shoals, Hillside, and East Ridge housing developments that surround Northeast High School. In their community, the young men learn that those who are willing to defend themselves physically are the ones that survive. According to one player, "You gotta be willing to fight to survive. If somebody attacks you then you gotta get them back." This attitude is consistent with the way in which many men of many cultures have addressed their need to survive. Yet, the frequency with which the young men from Northeast confront aggressive behavior is what gives the community considerable influence on players' behavior. The players' retaliatory behavior that disregards standards of sportsmanship may manifest itself on the court or in a related manner off the court.

We were playing our intracity rival, Ford Heights. We were up by 4 points with 44 seconds left in the game. Capleton jumped high for the defensive rebound. After he pulled the rebound down he saw Richard running down the court so he threw him the ball. Richard ran down the court, caught the ball, and got up as high as he could to shoot the lay up. At the same time Richard was shooting the lay up one of the opposing players ran down the court full speed and jumped right into Richard when he was at the highest point of his jump. Richard hit his head against the back board, his feet hit the mat under the basket and then his head hit the ground. Our entire bench jumped up to take the floor. I jumped up because the foul was essentially a "take out foul" (a foul intended to injure a player). I moved a few steps from the bench and turned around and told all of our players to sit down. It was tripped out because guys that don't ever want to do much fighting or anything were pretty upset. The game was held up 15 minutes while Richard laid on the ground. During this time Troy, one of our hot heads (a player eager to fight) just kept getting upset and moving around and staring at the other team's bench because he wanted to go after the guy that knocked Richard down. I had to grab him by his jersey and tell him to sit down. I then pulled him and Lance, another aggressive player to the side and said, "Y'all can't loose control now. Y'all know who these guys are. If it is that serious you will have the opportunity in a more conducive setting to take care of them." (All of this to mean, if you want to get them you have to get them at another moment. I was banking on the fact that once that emotion died down then the urge to do something violent would also die). I asked Lance to try and keep Troy under control.

While coach Benson was tending to Richard I kept talking to the players. Coach Benson returned to the bench and started talking about what we had to do to finish off the game. Troy was still a little out of control and finally his former football coach came down out of the stands and took him into our locker room.

The paramedics arrived and they stabilized Richard's neck and transported him to the hospital. . . . Also during the time Richard was down I pulled Coach Benson to the side and said, "I think we better not even go shake hands today. We better just let the coaches shake hands and we should send the team to the locker room." Coach Benson said, "Okay, Let's do that." As Richard was removed the fans clapped. The game resumed. . . . We eventually won the game. Coach Benson said after the game, "Damn. We always gotta pay such a high price for a win."

Game over, night over? No. Benson and I went to the hospital to check on Richard and his family after the game. When we arrived at the hospital there were about 30 friends and family waiting to see Richard. As coaches we got to go back first. When we saw him he was shivering and shaking. His mother kept trying to comfort him and he kept saying, "Momma my head hurts so bad. Make it stop Momma." Tears started rising up in his eyes. I asked him had they tried to give him anything. He said no. They had given him a catscan to check for internal damage. He had a big fat hickie on his head but remained conscious. I went back out into the lobby and sat down. Coach Benson came out a little later and said, "I can't hardly stand to see him like that." I sat talking to another player's father and then Coach Benson went back into Richard's room.

While I sat in the lobby, David, the young man from the Ford Heights team who had fouled Richard, arrived at the hospital. Of course our two hot heads, Lance and Troy were also present. One of the ladies that was waiting to see Richard turned to me and asked, "Are you one of the Northeast Coaches?"

"Yeh," I said.

"Well you better go and get your players 'cause they out here trying to get after that boy who knocked Richard down," She said. Right after she said this someone else told me that Mr. Gerwin, our statistician, had sent David home. Luckily for all the young men, Mr. Gerwin, who has worked with a lot of the kids from all over Northeast, saw David first and told him it would just be better if he went home. So he left.

The Northeast players' desire to retaliate was partly conditioned by their community's normative expectation that one retaliate when attacked. Although the players never realized revenge on the player from Ford Heights, they stood ready to transcend normative standards of sportsmanship should the need arise to defend themselves. It is in this way that the community context influenced the players' behavior with regard to sportsmanship.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Northeast Knights basketball team represents a microcosm of youth sport in America. In their everyday participation in sport, the Knights, like other young athletes, are confronted with contradictions regarding sportsmanship, competition, and winning. For instance, the sport of basketball itself proposes to be a noncontact sport; yet, the level of physical contact is dictated by rules that are interpreted by officials who vary from game to game. Thus, a "cheap shot" or a "hard foul," both violations of sportsmanship standards, vary within the context of the officials' interpretation of rules. Such circumstances give players the responsibility of

reconciling the shifting definitions of sportsmanship with the objective of winning.

Specific social factors also make reconciling the contradictions between sportsmanship and competition difficult. In the case of the Knights, issues of race create an interpretive dynamic that affects the players' perceptions of fair play, equitable treatment by officials, and the playing environment. The Knights developed a collective memory of racism and discrimination as part of the culture of play in places like Wilmington County. This collective memory "is broadened with each additional story told" and "intensifies individuals' awareness of racism and discrimination" (May, 2000, p. 202). With these anticipated feelings of hostility in Wilmington County, the players were in a defensive mode and prepared to push their standards of sportsmanship to the side for the sake of survival in a competitive environment. These micro-level contexts create yet another dilemma for young athletes.

Some might suggest that the newfound emphasis on winning in youth sport has been responsible for the deterioration of sportsmanship among teams like the Knights. Yet, in viewing the historically competitive attitudes of Americans, it is clear that winning has been a long-standing tradition. In fact, it is the competitive ideals of winning at all cost that have been the basis on which countries like America have been built. It is no surprise then, that our sport, including youth sport, would manifest the contradictions between fair play and all out victory. It is within the macro-level context of capitalism—as free-market competition—that athletes have pushed the lines of fair play.

Perhaps what has contributed to the contradictions between sportsmanship and winning most has been the greater emphasis on material rewards that we give to the victor. Winners are given status and wealth, whereas losers go little recognized in all arenas of life. Still, we push for an ideal of sportsmanship and fair play in competition even when all around contradict this ideal. How can we suggest to youth that they compete fairly and with a decorum of sportsmanship when there are countless examples of misconduct throughout all realms of everyday life? High-profile incidents of competitive misconduct in schools, business, and sport reaffirm to youth the importance of doing whatever it takes to win.

One suggestion for countering this competitive culture in youth sport has been to develop and encourage the playing of "cooperative games"—that is, "games that create situations in which success in a skill-perceived task (an activity or a game) is determined by a joint or cooperative effort toward some goal in which there is a common interest" (Ramsey & Rank, 1997, p. 30). The idea is that cooperative games would help modify the behavior of children because such games would emphasize cooperation and collaboration rather than competition. Although such a goal is admirable, I see it as a difficult task to create better attitudes toward cooperation and sportsmanship because these cooperative games cannot be divorced from the broader

social contexts of American life. In America, we value success through competition; and, as long as we have this as a value, we can expect our youth sports to reflect the contradictions inherent in reconciling values of competing to win with values of sportsmanship.

NOTES

1. A 51% completion rate for high school is dismal, yet it is on par with the statewide average of 55%. Georgia's students also rank 46th in national standardized-testing averages. Consequently, poor educational achievement and testing continue to be central issues in Georgia politics.
2. In the Columbine, Colorado, high school shootings, two disgruntled students, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, entered their high school, detonated homemade bombs, and fired an assortment of semiautomatic weapons at classmates and teachers. After the April 20, 1999, massacre, 13 were dead, several wounded, and Klebold and Harris had committed suicide. The entire ordeal was videotaped on school surveillance cameras. The fact that these shootings took place in small-town America raised national consciousness about school safety, troubled youth, and the efficacy of law enforcement to respond to such events.
3. The "Old South" is characterized by a time between the late 1800s and the late 1950s, just after the end of African Americans' enslavement and before the dissolution of Jim Crow segregation in the south. At that time, Whites' blatant racism and racially motivated attacks against Blacks were both commonplace and acceptable. The most violent attacks, in the form of lynch mobs, occurred from 1880 to 1930 in the southern states. Many African Americans were lynched at that time. For a discussion of Old South violence against African Americans, see Tolnay and Beck (1995).
4. Whether the players have overemphasized race in their interpretation is a question raised in a multitude of ambiguous interracial encounters. I take this discussion up elsewhere. See, for example, May (2001). In short, I argue that there is a cumulative effect of negative racial encounters, such that "African Americans evaluate their immediate encounter alongside a host of past interracial experiences in an effort to place that encounter within the context of their broader understanding of race and act accordingly" (p. 99). Furthermore, past negative racial encounters will continue to press African Americans to define sometimes-ambiguous interracial interactions as racist or discriminatory even when there are viable alternative interpretations.

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“I WANT TO BE THE MINORITY”¹

The Politics of Youthful White Masculinities in Sport and Popular Culture in 1990s America

Kyle W. Kusz

In this article, the author offers a contextualized cultural analysis of the “youthful” White masculinities constituted in two sites: first, a 1997 Sports Illustrated cover story titled, “Whatever Happened to the White Athlete?” and second, a discourse about the social-psychological development of adolescent boys written in the wake of the rash of school shootings that took place in the United States in 1997-1998. The author’s main contention is that these representations of disadvantaged and victimized youthful White masculinities found both inside and outside of sport discourses signify a new representational strategy of White male backlash politics in the late 1990s—the youthification of the White male as victim trope.

I’m talking about the disadvantages of being a white guy in America. I’m sick of minorities hogging the good complaints. Whitey’s been silent for too long . . . whitey’s been getting a constant pounding. I’ve been taking so many lefts I’m begging for rights.

—Spade (1998, p. 52, emphasis added)

It is also the era of the multicultural. And the challenge of this multicultural era is the challenge of living in a world of difference. It requires generating a mythology of social interaction that goes beyond the model of resentment that seems so securely in place at these times. . . . Indeed, as the purveyors of “white reign” assert themselves, they simply underscore their own vulnerabilities and fragilities.

—McCarthy (1998a, p. 339, emphasis added)

As I search the radio for background music to facilitate my writing process, I tune into Green Day’s latest release, “Minority.” For the uninitiated, Green Day is a West Coast punk band whose music was surprisingly embraced by the pop music mainstream in 1995. Characteristic of punk music, Green Day’s music is fast, hard, and defiant. Yet, many of its songs, particularly those that have received airplay on mainstream radio stations and MTV, are also distinguished by great melodies and infectious choruses. “Minority,” Green Day’s first song off their new CD, features a catchy tune that invites listeners to bob their heads and sing along with the chorus (“I want to be the minority”). Since its release, the song has regularly appeared on MTV’s show, *Total Request Live*,² an unofficial measuring stick of what’s popular with America’s teens.

As I listen to Green Day's song, I contemplate the seemingly peculiar popularity of a punk song performed by three young, White guys proudly proclaiming a desire to be "the minority."³ In all honesty, I am not surprised that such a song would find its way into mainstream pop music radio stations and MTV in 2000. "Minority" was preceded in the 1990s by the popularization of "alternative" music, a malleable label used to describe a variety of music (grunge rock, indie rock, and 1990s punk, to name a few). Perhaps the most notable and unifying elements of alternative music are its performance and consumption by Whites, particularly White males, and its appropriation of language and imagery associated with "working class and underclass white cultures" (Newitz, 1997, p. 146).⁴ Green Day's anthem can be located within this 1990s popular music context in which we hear a number of songs by White male artists who express a desire for alterity and make claims of being disadvantaged and victimized. But as the alternative music trend lost some of its momentum in the late 1990s, the popularity of Green Day's "Minority" demonstrates that in the new millennium, there is still a market and demand for songs by White male bands expressing sentiments of being victimized and ill treated.

Alternative music represents just one of several sites of contemporary American popular culture in which one encounters images and narratives of victimized young White males. In this article, I examine such images and narratives of disadvantaged young White males as they are produced in a number of best-selling books that address the social-psychological development of adolescent boys written in the wake of the rash of school shootings perpetrated by young White boys in 1997-1998 (Garbarino, 1999; Gurian, 1997, 1998; Pollack, 1998) and a 1997 *Sports Illustrated* cover story titled, "Whatever Happened to the White Athlete?" which forwards a panic-driven tale about the declining position of White male athletes in American professional and high school sports (Price, 1997). My aim is to offer a contextualized cultural analysis of these discourses that explains how their representations of "youthful" victimized White males are not only constituted by, and constitutive of, the representational strategies of 1990s White male backlash politics, but signal a new inflection of these representational strategies.

My project draws on David Savran's (1998) observation that the 1990s marked "the ascendancy of a new and powerful figure in U.S. culture: the white male as victim" (p. 4). But unlike Savran's work, which ignored the context of American sports and focused on older White masculinities that largely conform to the biographical dimensions of the baby boom generation, my study examines more youthful White masculinities produced both within and outside of the context of American sports. Building on Savran's work, I contend that these representations of disadvantaged and victimized youthful White masculinities signify a new representational strategy of White male backlash politics—the youthification of the "White male as victim" trope. I highlight the youthful character of these White masculinities for a couple of reasons. First, I use the term *youthful* because the ages of the

representations of White masculinities that orient this study range from adolescent boys to 20-something professional athletes. Second, within the discourses I examine, there is a frequent slippage back and forth between the use of terms like *boys* and *young males* and *males* or *White males*, suggesting that these images and narratives about young White boys/males signify something more than just innocent stories about disadvantaged (White) boys (namely, they serve to deny and disavow the privileges of being White and male not only in fin de siècle America but also in the future as we move into the new millennium). Finally, I use the term *youthful* to signify how these texts use the terms *boys* and *youth* in ways that are meant to invoke connotations of innocence, lack of constraints, and hope for the future. Such innocent images of young White boys become political when they are produced within a post-Columbine context in which the violent practices of at least a few young White boys complicate such an articulation between innocence and youthful White masculinity.⁵

At first glance, these seemingly unrelated sites of American popular culture—the discourse on the development of adolescent boys and a *Sports Illustrated* report about the disappearance of a White majority within American professional sports—would not seem to share very much in common. But, through my analysis, I articulate these sites together as localities of the national popular involved in the production of images and narratives of victimized and disadvantaged young White males that both reflect, and reproduce, the discursive logics of the contemporary White male backlash. By making connections between these popular sites—one that exists outside of sport and the other within sport—I highlight the pervasiveness of this strategy of representing young White males as vulnerable, victimized, or otherwise disadvantaged subjects. I am interested in these seemingly banal sites of popular culture (what Berlant [1997] called the “waste material of everyday communication,” p. 12) because they are the places where conservative backlash ideologies that seek to reconceal, protect, and resecure the representational and material privileges of White masculinity are being translated into a “non-ideological” and “common sense” viewpoint and where they are learned and mobilized by real social actors to make sense of their everyday lives (Kellner, 1995).

ON WHITENESS

whiteness is . . . intimately involved with issues of power . . . [and] profoundly influenced by demographic changes, political realignments, and economic cycles. Situationally specific whiteness is always shifting, always reinscribing itself around changing meanings of race in the larger society. (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998, p. 4)

To illuminate the politics of these “victimized” youthful White masculinities, my analysis is theoretically informed by the recent critical scholarship on Whiteness that has been produced across a wide range of disciplines—including literary studies, sociology, history, speech communication, and

cultural studies (Frankenburg, 1997). This contemporary interest in examining Whiteness is, following Dyer (1988), a response to the fact that critical studies of race have tended to focus on historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, thereby overlooking Whiteness "as if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human" (p. 6). In an effort to denaturalize the idea of Whiteness as the "privileged place of racial normativity," these critical studies of Whiteness have viewed it as a social construction rather than as a "natural" biological category (Wray & Newitz, 1997, p. 3). Such a social constructionist view of Whiteness emphasizes that its meanings are produced by "socially and historically contingent processes of racialization, constituted through and embodied in a wide variety of discourses and practices" (Wray & Newitz, 1997, p. 3). In addition, the meanings of Whiteness are understood as always being intimately constituted by and constitutive of relations of power (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998).

Critical readers of Whiteness also have pointed out that the discursive and social power of Whiteness resides, at least partially, in its ability to be both everything and nothing (Dyer, 1988; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). Nakayama and Krizek (1995) suggested that "whiteness makes itself visible and invisible, eluding analysis yet exerting influence over everyday life" (p. 293). Keeping with the tendency of Whiteness to be invisible, Aanerud (1997) argued that it is important to read Whiteness into texts that are not explicitly about race if one is to disrupt Whiteness as the unchallenged racial norm. Shome (1996) reinforced this point by arguing that the goal of critical Whiteness research is to expose and illuminate "the everyday, invisible, subtle, cultural and social practices, ideas, and codes that discursively secure the power and privilege of white people, but that strategically remains unmarked, unnamed, and unmapped in contemporary society" (p. 503).

This recent research on Whiteness also illuminates that Whiteness is not a monolithic, unchanging, and fixed category that always already embodies a certain set of meanings within any and all cultural spaces (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). The exemplary historical studies on Whiteness done by Roediger (1994, 1999), Allen (1990), Nelson (1998), and others have illuminated the historical contingency of the meanings of Whiteness. Also, Hartigan's (1997a) ethnographic work on the meaning of Whiteness for poor Whites in Detroit in the 1990s—a space where Whiteness is not equated with economic or social privilege—called attention to the fact that within a specific historical moment in the United States, multiple forms of Whiteness always exist. Thus, Whiteness cannot be understood in an essentialist or overly reductive manner that obfuscates the polysemic, contingent, and dynamic characteristics of Whiteness—how Whiteness is inscribed with different meanings within various cultural spaces and historical moments. Critics of Whiteness must be aware of how Whiteness always already interacts with such things as gender, class, nation, generation, age, and sexuality, thereby inflecting the meaning of Whiteness in subtle ways (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998).

Given its multiplicity, the meanings of Whiteness within a specific historical era can even be conflicting and contradictory. Critics of Whiteness have keenly pointed out that these conflicting and contradictory meanings of Whiteness facilitate the hegemonic force of Whiteness. As Davy (1997) argued, Whiteness has the capacity for “a number of sometimes conflicting ideologies used differently and differentially depending upon the historical needs of White control. Whiteness is not a totalizing force, but one which changes and shifts in response to historical conditions” (p. 213). Davy’s point here highlighted the need to recognize that the internal contradictions and conflicts of representations of Whiteness often mask the insidious and not so obvious ways in which the normative position of Whiteness in American culture is reproduced. Thus, one must be particularly attentive to the ways in which constructions of Whiteness as unprivileged, victimized, or otherwise disadvantaged—images that seem to contradict the ideology of Whiteness as privileged—can work in particular contexts as a mechanism to resecure the privileged normativity of Whiteness in American culture.

Taken together, this recent research on Whiteness highlights the need for critical studies of Whiteness that are conjuncturalist in their approach and that seek to make visible the discourses, practices, and material conditions that produce discourses of Whiteness (and that very often render it invisible and hide its dominating effects). With these points in mind, I turn my attention toward outlining the specific historical and cultural conditions of post-1960s America that implicitly figured the victimized youthful White masculinities that were constructed in a number of books about the development of boys and *Sports Illustrated’s* “crisis” narrative about the position of the White athlete in American professional sports.

REPRESENTATIONAL POLITICS OF WHITE MASCULINITY IN 1990s AMERICA

You cannot understand an intellectual or artistic project without also understanding its formation: that the relation between a project and a formation is always decisive; and that the emphasis of Cultural Studies is precisely that it engages with both, rather than specializing itself to one or the other. (Williams, 1997, p. 168)

Post-1960s America has been marked by a conservative backlash politics that, on one front, sought to arrest the scant gains that historically marginalized groups (women, people of color, gays and lesbians) have made since the 1960s (Giroux, 1997a; Savran, 1998). Savran (1998) identified a number of forces of this time period that have produced this conservative backlash:

the reemergence of the feminist movement; the limited success of the civil rights movement in redressing gross historical inequities through affirmative action legislation; the rise of the lesbian and gay rights movements; the failure of America’s most disastrous imperialistic adventure, the Vietnam War; and, perhaps most important, the end of the post-World War II economic boom and

the resultant and steady decline in the income of white working- and lower-middle-class men. (p. 5)

As these changing historical conditions made visible the structural privileges of White masculinity in the United States, they simultaneously engendered a crisis of identity for a number of American White males (Weis, Proweller, & Centrie, 1997; Wellman, 1997). Popular symptoms of this crisis are the appearance of television shows like *Men Behaving Badly* and *Becker*⁶, the popularity of Robert Bly's "Iron John" stories and the Promise Keepers, the rise of White militias epitomized by Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, and the resurgence of White supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan (Faludi, 1999; Kimmel, 1996; Savran, 1998). Amidst this growing anxiety among a number of White men, a conservative backlash politics developed that used a number of strategies to resecure the structural privileges of White masculinity just as it simultaneously disavowed the existence of these privileges.

This conservative backlash politics was underpinned and motivated by specific race- and gender-based interests. For example, the main mouthpieces and figureheads of backlash discourses are White men like radio personalities Rush Limbaugh and Bob Grant, or columnist Mickey Kaus (Giroux, 1997a), or even fictional figures like D-Fens, from the immensely popular early 1990s film, *Falling Down* (1993). Consequently, I rename conservative backlash politics as "White male backlash politics." By White male backlash politics, I mean those images, representations, and discourses that are currently being deployed in American culture in a symbolic (and material) struggle over the meanings articulated with White masculinity in the United States (McCarthy, 1998b).

Backlash politics particularly intensified during the 1980s with mean-spirited discourses about welfare, drugs, and crime, which demonized African Americans (particularly young males, single moms, and welfare recipients) and represented their social problems as individual shortcomings and deficiencies. Such discourses blamed already vulnerable minority populations for their economic and social difficulties and disadvantages while obscuring the devastating effects of the economic policies of Reaganism and deindustrialization on these groups (Cole, 1996; McCarthy, 1998b; Reeves & Campbell, 1994). In the early 1990s, widely reported struggles over the academic canon, affirmative action, multiculturalism, illegal immigration, and English-language-only legislation became key sites of this White male backlash (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998, p. 11).⁷ Within each of these struggles, the combatants were largely divided along racial lines between Whites and people of color. At stake in these debates were whether to extend or contain the rights given to these marginalized social groups (Giroux, 1994, pp. 29-30) and whether Whites and males would bear witness to (and rectify) the racial and gender-based injustices that occurred in the United States in the past and those that persist in the present. Historically marginalized groups—namely, people of color—used a strategy of identity

politics⁸ in an effort to demand their inclusion as full American citizens (economically, culturally, and politically). Within the logic of identity politics, minority subjects (women, people of color, and gays and lesbians) took the offensive by arguing that their oppressed and marginalized positions were a direct result of the privileged positions of the dominant groups of the United States (Whites, males, heterosexuals).

One notable change within these backlash offensives of the 1990s was that Whiteness—or more often, White masculinity—was increasingly marked publicly as the “oppressive, invisible center” of the American social formation (Giroux, 1997a, p. 286). This public scrutiny of White masculinity as always already dominating, oppressive, insensitive, and uncaring is exemplified in a 1993 *Newsweek* cover story titled, “White Male Paranoia,” which announced that “feminists, multiculturalists, P.C. policepersons, affirmative action employers, rap artists, Native Americans, Japanese tycoons, Islamic fundamentalists, and Third World dictators, [are] all . . . saying the same thing [about White males]: *You’ve been a bad boy*” (Gates, 1993, p. 48).

In response to these critiques of White masculinity, a conservative backlash formed that took issue with this construction of White masculinity as oppressive, dominant and dominating, uncaring, and socially and economically privileged. American media culture (television shows, mainstream Hollywood films,⁹ popular music, talk radio¹⁰) became an important terrain that never simply reflected such backlash narratives but was instrumental in producing and disseminating the logics and the key figures constitutive of White male backlash discourses. Figures like Rush Limbaugh and D-Fens became frequently cited popular embodiments of a new simulated figure—the “angry White male” (Gates, 1993). The cultural function of the simulated angry White male figure was that it enabled the rage and resentment of White males embittered by the public criticisms of White masculinity to be conveyed publicly. Yet, this repressed rage and resentment, expressed in simulated angry White males¹¹ like D-Fens, simultaneously allowed such derogatory sentiments to be disavowed by “real” White males as an exaggerated representation of their feelings.¹²

But the angry White male was not the only representational strategy employed by the White male backlash. In fact, this conservative backlash reconfigured White masculinity in a number of ways to contest the emergent view of White masculinity in the 1990s as always already dominant, privileged, and oppressive. One very prominent strategy constituted White men as the besieged victims of the 1990s American social formation. This strategy of constructing White men as victims exemplified how Whites could also engage in identity politics (McCarthy, 1998b). This strategy also involved a measure of fantasy. For example, affirmative action programs were imagined as having unfairly slanted the economic playing field against White males despite plenty of sound information that clearly proved the economic advantages that White men still enjoyed in the 1990s (better pay, more opportunities, lower rates of unemployment) (Wellman, 1997). This strategy

of constructing White males as victims is deeply problematic because it requires a "sociohistorical amnesia" that refuses to bear witness to the histories of racial and gender inequalities in the United States, as well as the cultural, economic, and political privileges that White men still enjoy in the present (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998, p. 13).

Another representational strategy used by White male backlash politics of the 1990s is the use of a populist rhetoric that, without explicitly mentioning race or gender or class, implicitly reproduces and protects the practices, institutional arrangements, and social relations that enable the central and normative position of White masculinity to be produced. The racial and gender politics of this project are very often expressed through rhetoric about protecting American families, the nation, "traditional" American values, and individualism (Giroux, 1997c). This populist rhetoric is often employed to portray multiculturalist and feminist forces and discourses as threats to the values, practices, and social relations on which American families, traditional values, and the nation are said to have been founded.

It should also be noted that the White male backlash was particularly effective in interpellating many White men to its ideologies because of the economic anxieties that many middle- and working-class White men were experiencing in the 1980s and into the early 1990s (Fine & Weis, 1998). These anxieties were produced by the globalization of many American corporations; the flight of high-pay manufacturing jobs with good benefits overseas, replaced by low-pay service industry work with little or no benefits; as well as the development of new computer technologies that eliminated (or threatened to eliminate) many white-collar, middle-management positions. From 1973 to 1992, the median income of White males decreased steadily (from \$34,231 to \$31,012) (Wellman, 1997, p. 315). Unable to make sense of their loss of work or their declining or stagnating wages, the rhetoric of the White male backlash offered a variety of narratives that blamed the economic woes of "hard working Americans" (read: White males) on a host of racially and gender-coded scapegoats. Again, affirmative action programs were offered as a scapegoat. These programs, created to remedy the long histories of structural inequalities and institutionalized discriminatory practices against women and people of color, were strategically (mis-)represented as the sources of White men's declining or stagnating economic circumstances. Such (mis-)representations also masked how post-Fordist processes of deindustrialization or the laissez-faire U.S. economic policies of the 1980s had significantly contributed to the declining (or stagnating) economic fortunes of American White men. Even further, these conservative backlash narratives concealed how the decline in White men's median incomes did not mean any deterioration (by any measure) of their economic advantage over non-Whites and women (Wellman, 1997). In fact, Wellman (1997, p. 315) provided evidence that, since 1973, women and non-Whites have experienced relatively similar declines as White men in their median incomes. Consequently, the main effect of these strategic (mis-)representations

offered by the White male backlash is that they turned White men's economic fears and anxieties (whether real or perceived) into a rage directed at women and people of color. In this case, racism and sexism became the conduits through which many middle- and working-class White men's feelings of rage and resentment were (re-)directed away from perhaps a more appropriate source for their anxieties—corporate America and their global, late capitalist policies (McCarthy, 1998a). Xenophobic desires were produced and legitimated to stave off any White-on-White, class-based conflict between White “haves” and “have-nots.”

The creation and repetitive presence of these backlash representational strategies are part of a broader trend in which mainstream American popular culture developed a seemingly insatiable appetite for representations of nonnormative, deprivileged Whites (whether in racial or economic terms) and even “trashy” White figures (many of whom are male) (Hartigan, 1997b; Newitz, 1997; Newitz & Wray, 1997). Hartigan (1997b) argued that the generation of these “bad images of Whiteness” are symptoms of the way in which the meanings ascribed to racial categories have changed due, at least in part, to the criticisms of Whiteness ushered in by the identity movements of the late 1960s (p. 325). Meanwhile, Newitz and Wray (1997) offered two primary reasons for the appearance of stories about White trash in American popular culture during this time period. On one hand, they contend that White trash can function as a politically conservative protest against so-called multiculturalist agendas such as affirmative action, revisionist education, and social welfare programs” (p. 173). Alternatively, the proliferation of representations of White trash might signify “the first wave of white assimilation to multiculturalist identity . . . [by] articulating racial dis-empowerment and whiteness together” (p. 173). Although I would optimistically like to believe the latter view, I think Newitz and Wray's former point more accurately captures the political/cultural function of these images of White trash—or, more generally, of Whites who are coded as unprivileged, disadvantaged, victimized, or somehow “trashed” victims—they serve as a means of denying and disavowing the structural privileges of Whiteness that have come under attack in the past decade.

Building on Hartigan's (1997b) and Newitz and Wray's (1997) findings about 1990s American culture, I have observed a number of popular films of the mid- to late-1990s that feature disadvantaged or otherwise unprivileged youthful White male figures that have been constituted by, and are constitutive of, the discursive logics of the White male backlash politics. Mid- to late-1990s Hollywood films like *Good Will Hunting*, *Gattaca*, *Great Expectations*, and even *Titanic* offered narratives that featured young White males whose lack of social, cultural, economic, or genetic privilege (in the case of the futuristic film *Gattaca*, in which one's genetics was the determining class structure of that society) is a central and featured aspect of their identity. Unlike an angry White male figure like D-Fens, American film audiences were asked to like and identify with these youthful, and seemingly unprivileged, White male protagonists. The narratives of these films could be aptly

described as contemporary versions of an Horatio Alger-like upward mobility tale. In each of these films, the White male protagonist is represented as coming from unprivileged origins but is able to transcend these origins because of his superior innate capabilities and extraordinary will. Another key aspect of these films is that they highlight class (or genetic) differences within Whiteness in ways that allow the protagonist's social advantages of being White and male to be effectively overlooked by many viewers of the film. By focusing on class differences, and by offering representations of likable, lower class (and otherwise unprivileged), young White male protagonists, these films signal a trend in which White viewers are interpellated to identify with unprivileged youthful White male subjects. At the same time, the protagonist's explicit lack of social and economic privilege opens a space where White viewers could use the film as evidence to disavow the social and economic privileges of Whiteness and masculinity.

I take time to briefly discuss these films because their representations of disadvantaged young White masculinities are resoundingly similar to the constructions of young White masculinities in the discourse about the development of adolescent boys and *Sports Illustrated's* special report on the contemporary plight of the White (male) athlete. Again, I identify these representations of disadvantaged, "victimized," or otherwise unprivileged youthful, White masculinities across the landscape of late 1990s American popular culture to further demonstrate how they represent a reconfiguration of White male backlash politics—the youthification of the White male as victim figure. Now, I turn my attention to the late 1990s popular discourse of boys development.

"LOST BOYS": YOUNG WHITE MALES AS SOCIAL VICTIMS

[There's] something very wrong with the adolescence our boys live today . . . adolescent boys are now, arguably, our most undernurtured population . . . social structures that over the ages have honored boys are getting dismantled, and there is no increase in the number of equally strong structural elements for teaching duty, meaning, and purpose. (Gurian, 1998, p. 3)

In the late 1990s, a popular discourse about a youthful White masculinity was constituted through a number of books explicitly concerned with the development of adolescent boys into "exceptional men" (Gurian, 1998, cover). Some of these books, like Michael Gurian's *The Wonder of Boys* (1997), *A Fine Young Man* (1998), and *The Good Son* (1999) and William Pollock's *Real Boys* (1998), garnered national acclaim and national best-seller status. The appearance of others, like Eli Newberger's *The Men They Will Become: The Nature and Nurture of Male Character* (1999), Daniel Kindlon's (with Teresa Barker and Michael Thompson) *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* (1999), and James Garbarino's *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them* (1999), speaks to the proliferation of interest and concern with the development of "our nation's boys." This widespread cultural concern with the development of adolescent boys intensified after the highly publicized school shootings committed by

(White) suburban adolescent boys during 1997-1998 in Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Springfield, Oregon; and Littleton, Colorado. What I find most interesting about this discourse about boys is its construction of young (White) boys as victimized and disadvantaged subjects. It is this repetitive construction of young boys as disadvantaged subjects that implicates these books as a site involved in the reconfiguration of White male backlash politics.

Rather than examining these books individually (noting their points of convergence and divergence), I will limit my discussion to the remarkable similarity of how the category of boys is constructed throughout these books. In each book, boys are rendered visible as suffering, confused, afraid, and vulnerable subjects who, beneath their hard exterior, have an innocent and good essence. Yet, the Whiteness of these boys is not explicitly mentioned in most of the books. In Gurian's (1998) best-selling book, *A Fine Young Man*, boys are represented in essentialist terms, as fragile and emotionally disadvantaged subjects. Throughout much of this book, Gurian describes boys through a rhetoric of suffering, victimization, and disadvantage. In various chapters, he wrote, "our adolescent males are suffering privation we have not fully understood" (p. 11); they are the "primary victims of school violence," as well as victims of girls' emotional manipulation (p. 41). According to Gurian, the fragility and emotional disadvantage of boys are biologically determined by such things as the "inherent intellectual fragility in the male brain system" (p. 17), or their "biological hardwiring" (p. 30). Through this biological determinist argument, young adolescent males are figured as disadvantaged victims of their own biology. In contradiction to this biological determinist argument, he also contends that boys are additionally disadvantaged by the development of an allegedly "female culture" that has "collapsed" the social structures set in place to "honor" males and nurture them into their proper roles as men (Gurian, 1998). So, not only does Gurian find it important to note how boys are figured as innocent victims of biological processes beyond their control, but his victimized representation of these White-unmarked boys is coupled with the strategy of shifting the blame for boys' abuses to an allegedly feminized American culture that failed to properly nurture them. These representational strategies set the stage for Gurian to offer his solution to the boys' improper behaviors—our society needs to re-erect those structures that will honor and return them to their proper roles of society's leaders.

Although it does not subscribe to Gurian's (1998) biological determinist view of the behaviors of boys, in *Real Boys*, William Pollack (1998) similarly discussed boys as being "in serious trouble" (p. xxvi). For him, boys' trouble (their confusion and alienation) is the result of conflicting messages about masculinity in post-1960s America that require boys to be both "New Age men" (sensitive, unselfish, and caring) and "cool dudes" (strong, stoic, nonemotive, and in control). Meanwhile, Garbarino (1999) noted in his discussion of lost boys that boys might exhibit hard exteriors, but these displays are merely superficial facades that mask a "vulnerable inner self"

(p. 22) and a "wounded soul" (p. 35). These authors even instructed the reader that although the vulnerability, disadvantage, woundedness, or innocence of these boys may not be easily seen because of the hard, cool, and confident masks that boys often present to the world, we should learn to read such masks as further symptoms of the silent suffering and vulnerability of these boys, harboring no doubts about the essential innocence and goodness of boys. Masterfully, the discourse on boys produced in these books is able to rearticulate the dominating and prohibitive behaviors that boys/men often enact on others as further proof of their own vulnerability, suffering, and need for compassion from our culture. In a language of compassion and care for our nation's sons, these books offer a solution to the contemporary problems of boys that, when examined critically, must be read as endorsing a project of remasculinizing men.

Within these books, readers are urged to discard gender stereotypes of males that do not allow them to see boys as they "truly" are—innocent, fragile, vulnerable, scared, and essentially good. They contend that these gender stereotypes of men as uncaring, selfish, nonemotive, and insensitive not only act as a "gender straitjacket" for boys (Pollack, 1998, p. xxiv) but also unfairly constrain the actions of boys and lead our culture to neglect the alleged "real" needs of boys, which are defined as being the center of attention, living without constraints on one's actions, and being placed into positions of control. In this case, where the normative and invisible character of masculinity has been exposed by feminist critiques and led others to categorize men in stereotypical ways, this discourse on boys, through its calls to stop using "unfair" gender stereotypes of men, seeks to resecure the invisibility of masculinity. It also calls for the shoring up of social structures for the purpose of developing young boys into "fine young men" (to paraphrase Gurian). At the same time, the discourse on boys has the effect of working to resecure masculine norms and values and institutional supports that men, within the logic of the backlash imaginary, fear have been unfairly eroded.

Although gender is the social force most explicit within this discourse about boys, race also plays a constitutive role in this discourse about boys. It is significant that this concerned discourse about our nation's boys is produced, not following stories of violence in urban schools in the 1990s (which are racially coded as Black or non-White in the popular imagination) or following the alarming tales of everyday violence in Black, urban communities showcased in early 1990s films like *Boyz in the Hood*, *Juice*, or *Menace II Society*.¹³ Instead, this discourse about boys is produced only in the midst of the multiple school shootings involving White suburban boys. Only in Garbarino's (1999) book is the racial dimension of this discourse on boys openly acknowledged. Taken as a whole, Whiteness is largely represented as normal or neutral within this discourse on the development of boys (Aanerud, 1997). Although Whiteness is largely rendered invisible through this "normal" and "neutral" discourse about boys, its presence can also be viewed in small traces, usually through imagery. For example, most of the book covers display images of frail-looking, innocent, blonde- and brown-

haired, White-skinned boys. Or, the Whiteness of this discourse is revealed by making explicit how the discourse uses coded language to evoke race in the reader's mind without having to discuss it explicitly. The use of racial codes within this discourse on boys is evident in Gurian's (1998) book, in which he begins the first chapter with this description of the type of troubled boy his book seeks to help:

He was a hard shell of a boy already at twelve. Though he and I lived in a middle-sized American city in the Pacific Northwest, he reminded me of urban youth who feel they have nothing going for them at all, trapped in inner cities, dangerous schools, and more dangerous streets. Jason dressed in the hip-hop style, and he had a buzz cut, his baseball cap on backwards, baggy jeans, and a flapping belt. He liked to talk about music, rap music, of course. He liked to show off. (p. 9)

Here, the comparison of Jason, a boy from a middle-sized American city in the Pacific Northwest who has an affinity for rap music, to an urban youth dressed in the hip-hop style invokes a series of racial signifiers (both White and Black) that implicitly connotes his White identity and implies that part of his trouble is his "inappropriate" identifications with styles and music popularly imagined as authentically belonging to African Americans.

The power of Whiteness within this discourse about boys is also evident in its marked difference from the highly racialized contemporary discourses of urban crime and punishment of the 1980s and 1990s in which young Black males are demonized as "menaces to society" who are prone to violence, unsuitable for rehabilitation, and must be incarcerated. Instead, in this discourse about boys, which is implicitly centered on White boys, these boys are constituted as our nation's sons and are not demonized. In fact, they are instead rendered visible as innocent, suffering, and unfairly disadvantaged subjects in need of our nation's compassion and support. Furthermore, rather than blaming (White) boys for their poor behaviors and expressions of rage, blame is shifted onto American culture. The usual suspects repeatedly held responsible for the waywardness of youth are identified—breakdown of the family or absent parents, violence in the media and video games, and "that crazy rock music that kids listen to today." In this case, American culture writ large is also indicted for becoming a feminized culture that has allowed the collapse of "traditional" social structures that once nurtured boys into proper men. Here, the power of Whiteness (and masculinity acting together) resides in the production of a discourse about White boys that does not blame them for their transgressions but instead blames American culture for failing boys while calling for reforms of American society and culture that serve to protect and resecure the hegemonic position (socially and culturally) of White masculinity.

Through its representations of victimized and disadvantaged White boys, this discourse about the proper development of boys can be read as being produced by, and productive of, the representational strategies and discursive logics of the White male backlash. In fact, the discourse's images

of victimized and disadvantaged White boys are remarkably similar to the images of victimized and disadvantaged adult White males in other backlash texts like Robert Bly's *Iron John* books; films like *Falling Down*, *Forrest Gump*, and *The Fan*; or Rush Limbaugh's conservative rhetoric about the embattled White guy (see Gates, 1993; Giroux, 1997a; Savran, 1998; or Spade, 1998). Like these other backlash texts, this discourse on boys offers interventions that have the effect of attempting to resecure the patriarchal institutional structures and masculine cultural norms and values in the name of facilitating the proper development of adolescent boys who are represented as being naturally (biologically) and culturally victimized and disadvantaged.

When subjected to close analysis, what also becomes notably apparent within this discourse about boys and what further signals its link to the conservative backlash is how the terms *boy*, *young male*, and *male* are often used interchangeably. At times, the books' discussions of the forces that negatively affect the development of boys or young males become discussions of the forces affecting adult males or males without any mention of age. This slippage is readily apparent in Gurian's (1998) text through his frequent use of his own and other middle-aged men's recollections of their adolescent years as his empirical "data," or through statements like, "Testosterone, then, is a major factor in naturally cutting *males* [rather than *boys* or *adolescent males*] off from emotional development" (p. 36). In this rather easy substitution of males and adult males for boys and adolescent males, one begins to see how the alleged "truths" about the needs of boys produce a series of effects that, whether intended or not, effectively seek to reconstruct a social formation (values, norms, and institutional structures) that recenters White masculinity within American social, cultural, and familial life. Even further, the link between this discourse on boys and the discursive logic of backlash politics is revealed through Gurian's (1998) identification of notorious male backlash proponent Warren Farrell's book, *The Myth of Male Power* (1994), as a "must-read" for anyone who wants to understand what "men and boys" (notice the slippage) suffer in all human health indicators (p. 280).

Finally, this innocent, vulnerable, and victimized depiction of the racially unmarked category of boys serves as a brilliantly effective means of promoting (whether intended or not) the interests of the White male backlash. When the goal of the politics of the White male backlash is to, in Savran's (1998) words, "recoup the losses they [White males] have allegedly suffered at the hands of women and people of color" (p. 4), such things as bolstering social structures that honor males and promoting social practices that avoid putting constraints on boys (because constraints of any kind are represented as being unhealthy to boys' proper development) implicate the discourse on boys' development as an armature of the conservative backlash politics. The category of boys is, perhaps, even more effective in generating support for the ideas of backlash politics because the connotation of the term boys with "innocence" and with "the future" helps to allow the discourse to appear to be nonideological—just an innocent, nonpoliticized discourse

interested in promoting the health and well-being of boys who represent our nation's future. But it is also because of the supposed innocence and good intentions of this discourse about boys that the backlash politics constitutive of it largely go unnoticed. That is, because the discourse is presented through noble rhetoric about making "adolescent boys into exceptional men" (Gurian, 1998, front cover), one might miss how it inconspicuously promotes a set of values and social arrangements that seeks to ensure the reproduction of the hegemonic social and cultural position of White masculinity. Not only does the use of the term boys, where race is erased and "boy" stands as a sign of a youthful White masculinity, allow the racial and gender politics of the discourse to be masked (or easily denied even if they are made visible), but the youthfulness of "boys" urges the reinvestment in social structures that honor (White) males not just in the present but, perhaps even more important, promotes the reproduction of these structures (and masculinist norms and values) in the future.

*SPORTS ILLUSTRATED'S CRISIS OF THE
YOUNG WHITE (MALE) ATHLETE:
AMERICAN SPORTS AS A SITE
OF THE WHITE MALE BACKLASH*

The white athlete—and here we speak of the young men in team sports who ruled the American athletic scene for much of the century—doesn't want to play anymore . . . the playing field [American professional sports arena] had become the nation's common ground, the one highly visible stage on which blacks and whites acted out the process of learning to live, play and fight together as peers. Today fewer whites stand on that common ground. (Price, 1997, pp. 32-33)

Sports Illustrated's December 6, 1997, issue offered readers a special report titled, "What Ever Happened to the White Athlete?" (Price, 1997). The article is represented as a 6-month long inquiry into the subject of race and sports that included "dozens of interviews with coaches, athletes, executives and academics and a nationwide poll of 1,835 middle school and high school kids" (p. 33). Despite its best efforts to give this article the gloss of an objective and soundly researched scientific report, the end product of *Sports Illustrated's* work is a panic-driven news story focused on the increasing absence of the White athlete in contemporary American professional sports. In my analysis, I implicate this article about the declining position of White (males) in sport as another site of 1990s America in which the representational strategies and discursive logics of the White male backlash politics are deployed and disseminated for public consumption. Then, I make visible how *Sports Illustrated's* report uses representations of youthful White males, configured by the logics and strategies of the White male backlash, as opposed to adult White males. These young White masculinit(-ies) first get figured as suffering and victimized minority subjects and then get contradictorily refigured, by the article's end, as having an extraordinary will and self-determining agency as well as a restored confidence. In addition, through

critically interrogating the functions and contradictions of the article's depictions of youthful White masculinities, we gain insight into how the article's conflicting and seemingly incongruous representations of White masculinity work to reproduce the hegemonic power of Whiteness.

The first evidence of how *Sports Illustrated's* special report on race and sports is produced by, and reproduces, the White male backlash ideologies is the magazine's conspicuous choice for the cover photo that accompanied the report. The cover displayed a nostalgic-laden, black-and-white image of four high-school-aged, clean-cut, affable White male basketball players whose uniforms and hairstyles unmistakably code them as pre-1960s figures. Each player has a conservative, closely cropped haircut; big ears; and inviting boy-next-door smile. Each dons Chuck Taylor sneakers and playing uniforms that are notably white. The players could easily be mistaken for the all-White high school basketball team featured in the 1986 blockbuster film *Hoosiers*. Each player is shown kneeling with one hand extended forward touching a single basketball resting in the center between them. This positioning of the athletes, each with a hand on the basketball, signifies them as a team that presumably works together toward a shared goal rather than as a group of individuals. Their smiling faces, oozing with optimism and innocence, and their unifying pose invite (White male) readers to nostalgically identify with them and a set of traditional values that they project—teamwork, competition, camaraderie, winning, hard work, and playing for the love of the game. Of course, these are the values that many sports pundits and fans resentfully decry as having been lost in today's professional athletes and sports. So, then, this 1950s team-oriented, sacrificial White male athlete constructed in *Sports Illustrated's* article is implicitly defined over and against the African American NBA or NFL player who is said to be more concerned with making money and achieving celebrity status than with winning championships and being a solid role model.

Sports Illustrated's decision to use a picture of pre-1960s White male youths rather than an image of contemporary youths is quite noteworthy for a number of reasons. Like other texts framed by the White male backlash ideologies, *Sports Illustrated's* decision to use this image evokes a pervasive nostalgia (invested in by many adult White males) for a historical moment imagined as a less complicated and innocent time, particularly for White males. A moment absent from such things as the "annoying" sensitivities of political correctness and affirmative action, the increased public marking of Whiteness, and directives to emphasize and celebrate multiculturalism and cultural diversity. This recollection of 1950s America, embodied in these smiling and wholesome young White males, invokes a longing for imagined good old days—prior to the "disrupting" events of the 1960s—when the centrality and preeminence of the White male was taken for granted, when the position of White males was rarely publicly challenged.

This nostalgic longing for a pre-1960s America expressed in this *Sports Illustrated* cover photo is a variation of the backlash strategy discussed

earlier in which populist rhetoric that does not explicitly mention race, gender, or class is deployed to reproduce social practices, institutional arrangements, and ideologies that center and normalize the position of White masculinity. In this case, by invoking these backlash ideologies through the photo without actually expressing them, this nostalgia (with its racial and gender implications) can be conveyed in a seemingly innocent and inconspicuous manner.

Sports Illustrated's cover image also begs the question: What audience would be interpellated by this image and special report on the plight of the professional White (male) athlete? *Sports Illustrated's* nostalgic black-and-white choice rather than a contemporary color photo of White youth may signal an effort to appeal to middle-aged White men who recognize themselves in the image. But *Sports Illustrated's* repeated framing of the crisis of the White athlete as a contemporary crisis of *young* White male athletes suggests that the intended audience is a young White male who is allegedly turning away from sport. Rather than arguing that the article is intended to appeal to either older White males or younger White males, I contend that the article's framing—its choice for the cover image, use of statistics collected from a national survey of current high school athletes, and stories of contemporary young White male professional athletes—invites the interpellation of White males across different generations. On one level, the article's focus on young White (male) athletes signals how representations of unfairly disadvantaged youthful White masculinities, in this case within sport, are increasingly being employed as symbols to serve the ideological ends of White male backlash politics—generating anxiety, resentment, and a sense of crisis about the supposed declining position of White males within American society and culture. On another level, the interweaving of these images and stories about both former young White (male) athletes and current White (male) athletes suggests an effort to construct a narrative that interpellates younger White males to invest in the White male backlash imaginary.

Henry Giroux (1997a) has noted that during the 1990s, "whiteness" was increasingly made visible at times when Whites were constituted as victims. *Sports Illustrated's* special report exemplifies Giroux's observation. In bold white letters that stand out in relation to the black-and-white photo, the question, "What Ever Happened to the White Athlete?" is posed. The word *White* appears in a much larger font; its prominence demonstrates how, in the late 1990s, Whiteness is often made visible and marked in popular culture at those times when the practices of a White-skinned person or group do not conform to, or fit within, the dominant meanings associated with Whiteness. Stated a bit differently, Whiteness is often made visible in the national-popular when particular performances of White-skinned subjects or historical events (such as the changing racial configuration of athletes within certain professional sports in the United States) potentially challenge, and threaten to disrupt, our "naturalized" ideas about the cultural meanings of Whiteness (its invisibility and/or normativity) or its

centered social positioning. Even further, Whiteness is not only made visible in the article to signify the disruption of its naturalized meanings or the social position of Whites in society, but it is paradoxically made visible to restore the invisibility of Whiteness and, thus, to resecure its normative and central sociocultural position.

Moving to the text of *Sports Illustrated's* special report, the article begins and ends with a story about a 29-year-old White male American sprinter named Kevin Little. We are first introduced to Little recalling a recurring incident in his life in which, to his dismay, he has to explain to disbelieving others (Whites and Blacks) that he is a professional sprinter. Little laments about how he commonly receives a look of surprise, a slight chuckle, and the words, "But you're white?" when he identifies himself as a sprinter (Price, 1997, p. 32). We are told that Little is tired of the disbelief and skepticism he encounters when he tells others that he is a sprinter. Next, we learn that in March of 1997, Little not only tied the American indoor record in the 200 meters at the world championships in Paris, but he was the first White American since 1956 to win a major international sprint title (Price, 1997).

This story about Little is not mobilized simply to highlight his remarkable on-track performances (although his athletic success is an important facet to his story). Rather, Little's story gains its currency because it figures him as a young White male athlete who is "suffering" from self-doubts brought about by fans, friends, and (Black) competitors stereotyping him as an inferior athlete because he is White. In the typical manner of a backlash text, Little is initially rendered visible to the reader as a victim. In this case, Little is constituted as a victim of the negative stereotypes about White athleticism. Here, the increased public marking of Whiteness by others is represented as having unfairly caused Little much suffering and unfairly constrained him by erecting social and psychic forces (people's unsupportive comments and his own self-doubts) that constrain his efforts to fulfill his aspiration of being the best sprinter he can be. In contradistinction to the arguments White conservatives often proffer that race does not affect a person's life outcomes (usually applied in cases in which people of color speak of disadvantages that are the result of their racial identity), Little's story asserts that the recent public marking of Whiteness—particularly, the limiting stereotypes of White athleticism—produces significant debilitating effects that unfairly restrict his actions and aspirations. Thus, within *Sports Illustrated's* report, race is deemed important in those moments when the public marking of Whiteness negatively affects the life possibilities of White males. Furthermore, through its exposition of the way in which making Whiteness visible has had derogatory effects on Kevin Little, *Sports Illustrated's* story implicitly endorses a desire to make Whiteness once again invisible.

It should be no surprise that *Sports Illustrated* begins its report by featuring an athlete like Kevin Little. As a White person participating in a sport commonly understood as being dominated by Black athletes (200-meter run), he is the perfect figure to play the role of the unprivileged,

minority White male subject within contemporary American sports. By making Little's story the lead, *Sports Illustrated* presents him as "Exhibit A" in its crisis narrative about the ground that the White (male) athlete has unfairly lost. Through its survey of middle school and high school youth's attitudes about sport participation, *Sports Illustrated* attempts to show that Little is not alone; that he is just one of many young White (male) athletes who have either turned away from sports or whose confidence in their athletic abilities has waned due to the disappearance of White (male) athletes on the national athletic stage. Young White males are represented as dropping out of the "big three" American sports (football, baseball, and basketball) at a rapid rate or as being unfairly deterred from participating in these sports by parents, coaches, and the media, all of whom see African American males as a dominating athletic presence that impedes White male athletes' chances to compete at either the youth or professional levels. These young, White male athletes are figured as being unfairly subjugated (having their agency constrained), not only because of the debilitating effects of negative stereotypes about White athleticism but because of the overwhelming success of Black males in American professional sport. Within this story line, Black male athletes are depicted as a dominant, discriminating, and exclusionary force whose success unfairly constrains the life possibilities of White male youths by forcing them to abandon their dreams of being a professional athlete. This narrative of Black dominance and White male disadvantage in sport enables the U.S. racial hierarchy to be turned on its head so that White males can be positioned as a seemingly legitimate unprivileged subject. But by inverting the social order, this story of White male disadvantage represents an attempt to forget or render inconsequential the long histories of racial inequalities, institutional racism, and White privilege that have existed in the past and that still persist in the present, both within and without sport (Rodriguez, 1998).

Sports Illustrated's special report, then, alleges that perhaps the most alarming effect of the disappearance of the White male professional athlete is that it has caused "a spreading White inferiority complex" for young White males (Hoberman, cited in Price, 1997, p. 44). Although *Sports Illustrated* makes this claim, it does not support this allegation with evidence. In fact, it actually provides evidence that contradicts such a claim. The article provides pie charts with shocking titles like "White Flight" and "Feeling Inferior" that catch readers' eyes and reinforce its thesis of White (male) athletes being in crisis. But closer inspection of these graphs and charts reveals that only 34% of the White male youths surveyed agreed with the statement, "African-American players have become so dominant in sports such as football and basketball that many Whites feel they can't compete at the same level as blacks," whereas 45% of the White male youths surveyed disagreed with the statement (Price, 1997, p. 34). Although short on evidence, these graphs and statistics, with their veneer of scientific objectivity and their prominent titles, create the impression that *Sports Illustrated* has suf-

ficiently supported its hyperbolic claims of White male victimization within sport.

The articulation of this White inferiority complex is also important because it shows how youthful White males, as opposed to middle-aged White men like a Promise Keeper, or Rush Limbaugh listener, or the celluloid figure D-Fens, are being mobilized within this backlash politics. The relative youthification of the White male backlash figure within this narrative about sport is significant because it is his youth—a traditionally subordinate subject position—that, in part, facilitates the production of his victimized identity. In *Sports Illustrated's* narrative, constructing American professional sport as a site of African American dominance and White inferiority requires that one selectively forget two things. First, that the commercialized and mediated American sports formation also includes sports like tennis, golf, extreme sports, professional wrestling, and soccer, which are (numerically) dominated by Whites. Second, professional sports are almost exclusively administered (coached, owned and operated) by White males. But, by focusing on relatively young White athletes (whether at the professional or youth levels of sport) within its narrative of White athletic crisis, such irrefutable evidence can be conveniently forgotten or overlooked.

In addition, as in the discourse of boys development, the connotation of "the future," which is often articulated with the category of youth, implies that the "spreading inferiority complex" being felt by these White males is not merely a problem of today but could escalate into a potential problem of the future. The unspoken anxiety that underwrites this claim of a spreading White inferiority complex among young White male athletes is, "If young White males feel inferior to African-American men in sport will this sport-specific inferiority complex translate into feelings of inferiority in other spaces and practices unrelated to sport?" Suddenly, what is at stake is not simply the cultural position of White males in sport but the cultural and social position of White masculinity in American culture as a whole.

Similarly, the category of youth is also frequently articulated with notions of "hope" and "limitless opportunities." Consequently, the alleged African American dominance in sport becomes a force that unfairly limits the life possibilities of White male youths afflicted by this supposed inferiority complex. It supposedly does so by influencing young White male athletes to give up their optimistic dreams of athletic stardom and effectively arrest their athletic development. The notion that taking away a young person's dreams is equivalent to arresting their development is subtly at play within this articulation of this White male crisis to youthful White males, especially as sport is understood as providing youths with valuable lessons about the merits of hard work, perseverance, meritocracy, and optimism that transcend their sporting experiences. Thus, the youthfulness of the victimized White male athlete intensifies what is at stake in the African American dominance of American professional sport. Not only is the alleged growing

White inferiority complex with young White males implicitly cast as a symptom of the eroding position of White masculinity within American culture in the present, but its articulation with youthful White males further suggests that it may have deleterious effects on them in the future.

Meanwhile, the article also produces another important image of White masculinity through a story about the athletic success of White NBA player, Brent Barry. Although Barry garners much attention as the son of NBA legend, Rick Barry, his story is important for *Sports Illustrated's* narrative because he defied conventional racial logic when he won the 1996 NBA Slam Dunk Championship. Thus, Barry is introduced into the article's narrative because he represents a young White male who has achieved a relatively high level of athletic success in a sport dominated by Black athletes in the 1990s (basketball). He is valorized for his strong will to succeed and his ability to be a self-determining agent who is not constrained by forces outside of himself (i.e., Black dominance in basketball, derogatory stereotypes of White athleticism). This representation of a youthful White masculinity as an unconstrained, self-determining agent is needed within *Sports Illustrated's* special report to counter its initial image of White masculinity as a suffering, disadvantaged, minority subject within American sports. In addition, this counterimage of White masculinity functions to resecure the normative way in which White masculinity is imagined within American culture (as sovereign, individualistic, self-determining agents), thus providing an imaginary solution to any possible anxieties created (in White male readers) by its initial construction of White masculinity as a suffering, constrained victim within contemporary American sports.

The construction of Barry as possessing an extraordinary will relies on the stereotype of Whites' athletic inferiority to Blacks and is enabled by the depiction of suburban culture (implicitly coded as White) as a social barrier for White (male) athletic success because it is overwrought with comforts and distractions like video games and abundant opportunities outside of sport. In addition, the supposed lack of community-wide support of White athletes is used to constitute suburban culture as a social constraint on White (male) athletes. Quite ironically, suburban comfort is cast in *Sports Illustrated's* narrative as a gigantic social barrier that young White male athletes have to overcome to become professional athletes. This peculiar representation of "suburban comfort as constraint" is necessary to constitute youthful White male athletes, like Barry, as possessing an extraordinary will. Coupled with its reliance on the stereotypical notion of White athletic inferiority, this depiction of suburbia allows young, White male athletes to be represented as having to work harder than the inner-city Black athlete. A testimonial from Barry is used within the article to legitimate this representation of suburban culture:

"It almost takes more effort to get out of a situation where you could sit back and be comfortable" he says. "If you're struggling you could say, 'I don't need to do this anymore. My parents have great jobs, I could go to any college I want.'

It's a much different set of social barriers; the pressure on you to perform isn't so great. If you're the white kid and you've got glee club after school, the ski trip on the holidays and Stratomatic baseball in the spring, well, that's what you're going to do. I pride myself on the fact that I had to have a lot of desire and will and competitiveness to get out of white suburban America and make it in a game dominated by great black athletes." (quoted in Price, 1997, p. 50)

Through his comment, Barry offers an amazing inversion of the customary sporting upward-mobility tale usually associated with basketball and African American, inner-city males in the 1990s. Within Barry's statement, the dire economic and social conditions (deindustrialization, drugs, rampant crime, institutionalized racism) that often leave economically disadvantaged, inner-city Black males few viable avenues for success other than sport are trivialized and rendered incomparable to the alleged social barriers facing the suburban White male athlete. In fact, these bleak social and economic conditions are constituted as advantages for the Black athlete because they produce pressure to succeed in athletics and community-wide support for athletics in the Black community. Incredibly, *Sports Illustrated* does not merely equate the social conditions of the suburban White male athlete and the inner-city Black male athlete; rather, it constitutes the plight of the White male suburban subject who has to overcome the "distractions" of suburban comfort and a White community that does not fully support his athletic investments as being more difficult than the condition of his Black male counterpart. The economic and social privileges of being White, male, and from the suburbs are reconstituted to become social barriers hampering White males' athletic success. *Sports Illustrated's* contradictory narrative of White male athletic disadvantage (a variation of the construction of the "White male as victim" trope) represents an unique and troubling attempt to disavow White male privilege. Yet, its framing of Barry's story also enables White masculinity within the *Sports Illustrated* article to be rendered visible not just as a social victim but also to be figured as a self-determining agent whose strong will and determination propelled him to overcome the social and psychological barriers necessary to achieve athletic success.

The configuration of Barry as a White male with an extraordinary will is reinforced by a final story about the lone White sprinter, Kevin Little. In the closing two paragraphs, Little reenters the narrative and is much different than the Kevin Little the reader met in the opening of the article. He is constituted as no longer being afflicted by feelings of self-doubt and defensiveness brought about by the negative stereotypes of White athleticism. Instead, Little is represented as using his newly visible Whiteness to gain an advantage on his Black competitors:

No one [African American] wants to lose to him. "Then the edge goes to me," he says. "I can look into their eyes and their faces, and if they have a little fear of losing to a white sprinter, I've won right there. *I'm holding the cards* (Little, quoted in Price, 1997, p. 51, emphasis added)

Little's quote is employed to both reaffirm the need to make Whiteness once again invisible while also serving to reassure the (White male) reader through this fabrication of White men as self-determining subjects who are not and will not be constrained by social conditions (like stereotypes, Black dominance, and lack of social support for their athletic endeavors). Little reemerges at the end of the article as a pedagogical figure for White males—an example of an unfairly disadvantaged White male who not only proves the superior will of White males but has even learned to use “black dominance as his weapon” (Price, 1997, p. 51). Thus, by the article's end, White masculinity is reconfigured not as a suffering and constrained social victim but as many White American men would like to imagine themselves—as self-determining subjects of history (rather than its objects) who author their own life outcomes and who are not constrained by social forces beyond their control.

CONCLUSION

Forms of media culture induce individuals to identify with dominant social and political ideologies, positions, and representations. In general, it is not a system of rigid ideological indoctrination that induces consent to existing capitalist societies, but the pleasures of the media and consumer culture . . . [that] seduce[s] audiences into identifying with certain views, attitudes, feelings, and positions. (Kellner, 1995, p. 3)

Several other cultural critics, influenced by the critical work being done on Whiteness, have illuminated how a number of popular culture sites—like Hollywood films (Clover, 1993; Giroux, 1997b; Kennedy, 1996; McCarthy, 1998a, Savran, 1998); AM radio (Giroux, 1997a), television (Newitz & Wray, 1997), and grunge music (Newitz, 1997)—have been instrumental in not only disseminating but also generating the representational strategies and logics of this White male backlash politics. Surprisingly, little work has examined how contemporary discourses involving sport, as a site of popular culture, have been influential in the production and dispersal of the logics of this White male backlash politics, whose implicit goal is to resecure the central and dominant cultural position of White masculinity in the late 1990s. My interrogation of *Sports Illustrated's* special report is an initial effort in this direction. Such critical attention of contemporary discourses and developments in sport can illuminate how sport has become an important site of the White male backlash because the overrepresentation of African American males in these sports enables the fabrication of a crisis narrative about the precarious and vulnerable cultural position of White males that can be seemingly defended through a quick glance at the “empirical” evidence of the contemporary racial makeup of American professional athletes.

Furthermore, my analysis provides evidence of how images of more youthful White masculinities are increasingly being employed within White male backlash texts. The youthification of the White male backlash figure suggests that an effort is being made to interpellate younger White males to

the White male backlash ideologies. Such an effort might produce a cross-generational investment by White men of various ages in these ideologies that would facilitate the continuation of the White male backlash's political goals in the future. Or, the youthification of the White male backlash figure might also be symbolically useful as it enables the popular acceptance of backlash ideologies that seek to resecure the hegemonic position of White masculinity within American culture in the name of such things as improving the lives of boys or in the name of enabling young White males an opportunity to pursue their interests in traditional sports, like basketball or football or track. Nonetheless, what can be said with some reasonable certainty is that the production of these representations of disadvantaged and victimized young White males within popular music, popular literature, and popular sport operates, as Kellner (1995) stated, as sources of cultural pedagogy that attempt to seduce (White male) audiences to "deny what is most obvious: the privileged position of whiteness" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998, p. 15).

NOTES

1. Title taken from Green Day's song, "Minority."
2. *Total Request Live* is a show in which mainly teen viewers can call and e-mail to vote for their favorite songs and videos.
3. Of course, it should be noted that Green Day's "Minority" chorus also contains the line, "Down with the Moral Majority," which could suggest that the song is meant to resist the contemporary conservative backlash politics. Nonetheless, rather than trying to pin down the song's meaning, I want to emphasize that it is the precisely polysemic character of the song—allowing many meanings both reactionary and resistive to be articulated to it—that allows it to be embraced unproblematically by mainstream radio and MTV as simply a recurrent expression of teen rebellion against adult authority. Perhaps more germane to my present discussion, the desire to be a minority expressed in the song allows it to fit nicely within the discursive boundaries of the White male backlash by reproducing images and narratives of White males as minorities, as disadvantaged, and as victims.
4. White male artists and bands like Beck (with his song "Loser" and its popular chorus, "I'm a loser baby, so why don't you kill me"), Pearl Jam (with their lamentful ballad, "Nothing Man"), the Offspring (with their Top 40 hit, "Self-Esteem" and its signature line, "I'm just a sucker with no self-esteem"), and Nirvana (with their infamous tune, "Smells Like Teen Spirit") make up the key contributors to this alternative musical trend.
5. I thank Dr. Cheryl Cole on this point. Our discussion helped me to see how the events of Columbine make the articulation of White boys with "innocence" and "hope for the future" a more fervently politicized representation.
6. *Men Behaving Badly* was an NBC sitcom that aired in the mid- to late-1990s and whose humor was predicated on watching two White, male twenty-somethings attempt to reclaim their masculine privileges. CBS' show *Becker* (1998) was one of the first to bring the "angry White male" (who, in 1998, can be constructed to elicit laughter and identification in its audience rather than discomfort and abjection) into American living rooms.
7. The White male backlash of the 1990s was also precipitated by the severe recessions of the late 1980s and early 1990s that even affected the middle classes (if not materially at least psychologically). White working- and middle-class men's fears about downward economic mobility due to these recessions and the increasingly

- globalized, post-Fordist American economy led to an intensification of racism for White men as they tried to draw distinctions between themselves and Black men, imagined as an inferior other (Weis, Proweller, & Centrie, 1997, p. 217).
8. By identity politics, I mean the political practices and mobilizations based on cultural and social identities that involve marking one's group as a victim of discriminatory practices in the past or present (Clarke, 1991).
 9. See Berlant (1997), McCarthy (1998b), and Savran (1998), for analyses of how contemporary films like *Forrest Gump*, *Disclosure*, *Falling Down*, and so forth can be read as crucial cultural, pedagogical sites in producing, authorizing, and gaining momentum for this conservative White male backlash politics.
 10. Giroux (1997a, 1997b) argued that talk radio, specifically Rush Limbaugh, is an important site through which this White backlash politics is constructed, popularized, and made desirable to the (White middle class) public.
 11. I use "simulated" in the Baudrillardian (1983) sense to mean a copy for which there is no original. Thus, I am not trying to argue that there is sufficient empirical proof to say that "real" American White men espoused the views attributed to the angry White male. In fact, I think such evidence is inconsequential. What I argue is that the very ambiguity of the actual existence of the angry White male (his simulated quality) enabled the complaints of real American White men to be publicly expressed, yet simultaneously denied, because real White American men did not exactly fit the extreme, paranoid profile of a D-Fens or the angry White male figure constructed in the *Newsweek* cover story.
 12. The simulated character of the angry White male even allowed "real" White men like Rush Limbaugh to express such "angry" racist or sexist or homophobic sentiments and later disavow them by claiming that he was just performing this alleged angry White male to the delight of his audience.
 13. By citing these films, I do not claim that they reflect a pregiven reality or provide a window on contemporary Black, urban life. Instead, as these films were very often interpreted as mirror images of the lives of young Black male youths in the early 1990s, such interpretations did not produce a mainstream discourse that called for compassion and understanding of the lives of urban Black male youths. In addition, within mainstream discourse, the films did not call for changes in the culture that produced such violence in urban America like this "discourse about boys" (which focused on White boys) did.

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TRENDS

WINNING WAYS

Constructing Values on a Girls High School Field Hockey Team

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Using observations and interviews of a girls high school field hockey team, this article investigates the values conveyed through participating in this sport. As the team had a lengthy record of success, the main value that permeated the team's culture was that of winning. Contrary to other scholars who tend to emphasize the negative consequences of having a high value placed on winning, this study suggests that winning can have generally positive results for the players and the community.

Although sports participation itself can have positive effects on athletes and broader groups, competition and winning seem to enhance those benefits. For example, success and competition seem to predict which athletes are likely to maintain rather than terminate being involved in a sport. Martin (1997) found that gaining recognition, having success, and perceiving oneself as having ability all contributed to persisting in sports. Research also shows that winning seems to enhance team cohesion and personal satisfaction (Williams & Hacker, 1982), whereas losing has a negative effect on the cohesion of interacting teams (Boone & Beitel, 1997; Matheson & Mathes, 1997). Finally, some of the community factors that Zhang and Pease (1996) found that spectators value about professional sports teams would likely be enhanced by the local team being winners. For instance, it is difficult to see how a losing team would "encourage achievement and success" or "make people feel proud."

However, many critics of the emphasis on winning in sport have tended to highlight the negative consequences. The widely accepted view is that too great an emphasis on winning leads to some of the worst excesses associated with sport, such as violence, cheating, debilitating injuries, and doping (Curry & Jiobu, 1984; Donnelly, 1993; Eitzen, 1996; McPherson, Curtis, & Loy, 1989; Miracle & Rees, 1994). The remedy suggested typically involves some balancing of values so that winning is only sought within the context of fair play (Eitzen, 2000) or other values such as safety from harm and the nonascriptive selection of participants (Conn & Gerdes, 1998). The most concise formulation of the downside of winning is by Crone (1999) who

developed a "theory of sport" based on the three independent variables of emphasis on winning, extrinsic rewards, and bureaucratization. As each of these variables increases in magnitude, certain results, primarily negative, are likely to follow.

An expression of this common focus on the "dark side" (Eitzen, 1996) of competition and winning is seen in the widely accepted contrast between play for fun and competition for victory. Seigenthaler and Gonzalez (1997), for instance, recommended youth sports as a form of "serious leisure," thus, an acceptable alternative to meaningless or destructive leisure that may attract youth. However, they warn against this turning into a quest for victory under the direction of parents or coaches, which would threaten to make the activity joyless. Similarly, Knoppers, Schuiteman, and Love (1986) contrasted a play and a professional orientation; the former approach values fair play over winning, and the latter does the opposite. One theoretical basis for this contrast is found in Coakley's (2000) delineation of how a play group differs from an organized competitive team. The more that a focus on victory characterizes a team, the greater the prospect of participants having fun dissipates. In these perspectives, it does not seem conceptually possible to have fun and/or play fair while pursuing victory.

This article investigates a winning tradition on a girls high school field hockey team. The team in question certainly values winning, but their honoring of competitive success goes beyond giving assent to that value. First, winning exists as a record of victories heavily predominating over defeats. This record has occurred over the course of several seasons and has become a collective memory (Fine, 1985) that current team members carry with them into competition. Furthermore, this team's winning tradition also implies that the outlook for the future is positive. In spite of changes in team personnel, setbacks, and even whole losing seasons, the pattern of winning is expected to prevail ultimately. Thus, the desirability of winning is backed by knowledge of how it has been achieved in the past and can be done in the future. This knowledge comes through interaction within the team and between it and its major support groups. We want to examine the construction of "winning" in this context.

SETTING AND METHOD

The field hockey team on which we focus plays for Las Fumes High School (LFHS). This high school is located in the community of Las Fumes in an inland Southern California area. Las Fumes' population of 50,000 is more than 50% Hispanic and about 30% Anglo. Until recently, the only movie theater near the city center showed Spanish-language films. Founded as a railroad stop in 1875, the city continues to be organized around this industry. Not only is it central economically, but spatially the railroad divides the city into north and south sections. South Las Fumes is largely made up of poorer, often recently immigrated Latin Americans. In this barrio, houses tend to be smaller, and gangs and graffiti are more common. North of the tracks, the city is still mostly Latino and mostly working class.

Although families very often indicate their climb up the social ladder by moving from south to north Las Fumes, the community as a whole is quite stable.

As with many working-class communities, Las Fumeans are enthusiastic about sports. The city has only one high school, so its teams are major recipients of citizen support. Although most of its buildings are fairly old, the campus of LFHS shows signs of student and community pride. Instead of random graffiti on school walls, several are painted with large murals that reflect the Hispanic heritage of much of the student body. The women's movement has had its impact on LFHS. A few decades ago, the only sports the community followed were boys football, basketball, and baseball. With the passage of Title IX in the mid-1970s, women's sports began to emerge as arenas of participation and achievement (Cahn, 1994). This opportunity has been accompanied by equalitarian attitudes among girls in sports. One team member suggested that it was "degrading" for girls to be mere water bearers for the boys football team. Virtually every girl interviewed mentioned her enjoyment of the physical activity of hockey and of being "in condition." One said, "Sports is really good; right now, sports is in, ya know . . . to be a jock is in."

The LFHS field hockey team was organized by Miss Sharp, the current head coach. Prior to coaching, Miss Sharp played field hockey at the college and club level in the eastern United States. Her assistant coach, Miss Martin, also played college hockey. Miss Sharp serves LFHS as a physical education teacher, whereas Miss Martin is an administrator, a position that has been useful in getting "little extras" for the team. More recently, a second assistant coach was added. This coach, Lucy Garcia, is a Las Fumes alumnus and went through college on a hockey scholarship. The outstanding players on the team during the 2 years we studied it usually had frontline offensive positions. Suzi and Jessi, both Chicanas, were recognized as the top contributors to the team over 3 successive years. The one defensive standout was the goalie, Jane, an Anglo, who was regarded as a superior competitor.

As for achievements, the LFHS team won 10 straight league championships. When the first California Interscholastic Federation (CIF)—Southern Section (representing all of Southern California, outside the cities of San Diego and Los Angeles) playoffs were held, Las Fumes emerged victorious. In subsequent playoffs, Las Fumes has consistently fared well, repeating as CIF champions one other season. The other side of Las Fumes' success is in the lives of individual players. The hockey team has had several girls gain college scholarships and be given consideration for national and Olympic teams.

We began gathering data for this article in the preseason period. In addition to several hours of conversations with the team's two main coaches, there were more formal interviews conducted with them and with eight of the team's members. During that season, several practice sessions and games were attended, and observations of team interaction were done in a variety of situations. The players interviewed were selected so as to

represent various career stages of team membership. They ranged from underclass girls who were first trying out for hockey to seasoned veterans who were entering their last season as key and even starring participants. Although other commitments precluded continuous research on the team, investigation began again the following season and carried through the end of the year. Thus, players who had been novices with marginal talent in the first season had by this time become the accomplished stalwarts of the team. In addition to observations of the team, interviews were again conducted with six players of all positions and ages. Finally, observations and an audio recording were made of proceedings at the annual hockey banquet.

THE COACHES AND THE TRADITION

In the high school context, with changing team members and fans, the coach or coaching staff is likely to be the most important actor in fostering a winning tradition. They are instrumental in disseminating the story of the team and using it to encourage new achievements. The story of the Las Fumes hockey team is nicely crystallized in a brochure that Miss Sharp produces and distributes each year at the hockey awards banquet. This brochure lists the individual and team achievements of Las Fumes hockey players over the team's history. Because all current team players are honored in the brochure by being named individually, they are likened to the galaxy of stars that played on past teams. The impression this has on these players is considerable. Although the brochure was distributed 6 months earlier, one of our informants was able to quote several specific headings and items from its contents.

The hockey banquet itself is held in the spring of each year. Team parents organized this honorary affair as a separate event after the team captured its second CIF title. The dinner draws the team and its key supporters together after the season is over to award trophies as well as honor all the players. Miss Sharp feels this major ceremony is a reflection of the greater enthusiasm of hockey supporters. It is also an event that helps to perpetuate that enthusiasm. As a ceremonial occasion, the banquet contributes to the winning tradition by inviting successful team alumni back and allowing current players to get an image of their own future. Miss Sharp said, "At the banquet we bring back the old players to see where they're going. And the girls see what you can get out of hockey if you stick with it."

The banquet functions as an elevation ceremony for hockey players, serving to honor and magnify achievements. In the first place, the accomplishments of individual players are magnified by the success of that season's team. Each varsity player is described by an appropriate superlative as the coach presents individual awards. It is a worthy honor to be designated as the "most enthusiastic" or having the "best ball control" on a team that has just completed a very successful season. Second, the team's qualities are raised to greater heights by being compared to illustrious teams of Las Fumes' past. At one point, for instance, Miss Sharp described the current team as "the best defensive team we've ever had" at LFHS. One incident at

the banquet provides the best illustration of the magnifying effects that can occur. After referring to the three Las Fumes alumni whom she expected to be playing in future Olympic Games, Miss Sharp presented an award to a junior varsity player, saying, "Besides the three who've gone through Olympic development, I could see Kate [the junior varsity player] flying around out there as a winger." In this substantial comparative leap, the history of winning allows a beginning high school player to be likened to an Olympic athlete.

Another way the team members become aware of the payoff for winning is by the special benefits that the team accrues. For instance, among all girls athletic teams, hockey was more frequently given new uniforms by the school. More important, Miss Sharp made special arrangements so that her players could enroll in a hockey clinic and refine their individual skills. She was able to convince the women's hockey coach of an Eastern university (and former coach of U.S. men's Olympic hockey) to offer a clinic at LFHS during several summers, one of only two camps he offers in California. As the clinics were held so close to home, it allowed many working-class players to attend for a nominal fee. The coach was assured of a substantial enrollment in his clinic and was given a chance to recruit Las Fumes hockey players. Miss Sharp said that he felt one of the LFHS players was capable of playing on his varsity immediately and that he was very interested in recruiting her.

THE COMMUNITY AND THE TRADITION

Field hockey has not won easy acceptance in Las Fumes. In part, this has to do with the history of the sport. Field hockey is new to the western states and is still not widely played. In fact, the sport was imported from England independently of the men's game and took root at certain private eastern colleges around 1900 (Barnes, 1969; Kane, 1974). Today, although almost 60,000 U.S. high school girls play, field hockey continues to be played most widely in the eastern United States, in more affluent areas, and in clubs and colleges (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2000; United States Field Hockey Association, 2000). In addition, high school hockey does not lend itself readily to being a social event because it must be played in the afternoon rather than on a Friday or Saturday night. In spite of these handicaps, hockey has, in fact, received considerable support and recognition from the community of Las Fumes.

As might be expected, the strongest supporters of the team are those most closely related to the players, that is, their parents and family. This ardent family support is evident throughout the round of hockey activities. That this is a change in parental attitudes is evidenced by Miss Sharp's comment, "The parents seem to support us more. They used to want the girls home after school to do other things, housework or something, but now we don't get the resistance that we used to from parents." In many instances, the hockey tradition becomes a family tradition. In spite of the responsibilities of large families and work, many parents and other family members

come out in force to see the games. Even fathers are willing to miss work to attend important games.

Parents do not merely permit their daughters to play hockey. They actively encourage and reward participation. One player provided a key instance of this parental attitude: "I came home one day with my knee as big as a basketball. I got hit right in the ball of the knee and it swelled up. So then my dad said, 'Right now, you've got to get knee pads.'" This anecdote is a good indication that this father, along with other parents, saw hockey as an activity worthy of effort and physical sacrifice.

The favorable reputation of the team has also had effects on other members of the community. One player has noticed that some male students from LFHS have begun to attend hockey games, even though they seem to know little about the technical details of the sport. After the game, they often ask the players to explain the what or why of game events. This interesting reversal of roles owes its occurrence to the winning tradition. Moreover, media coverage of the team is fairly substantial and appears in a variety of forms. Attention to the team in the *Las Fumes Flyer* (the local paper) is steadily high; one player described this as "no big deal." However, important league and playoff games have been featured in the *Verdugo Valley News*, the nearest "big city" paper. Finally, the girls hockey team has appeared more than once on Los Angeles television stations. Every girl interviewed was aware of these appearances; television coverage obviously is a big deal.

One of the effects of this news coverage was the stimulation of an early interest in playing hockey. Some players evinced a kind of anticipatory socialization to the team's traditions. This was expressed clearly by Suzi:

I had seen them on Prep Sports World (a television program from Los Angeles) when they won their first CIF championship. That was exciting for our high school to be in that. After that I just read the papers and I have a lot of articles on a lot of the athletes that have been here in the past. I would say [I started collecting articles] in junior high. When I came as a freshman I would talk with a lot of athletes and they were surprised about how much I knew about them and their achievements. I guess that made them feel good.

It is evident from Suzi's remarks that she strongly identified with the team before ever putting on a uniform. Suzi is presently a star member of the team, and her early initiation likely played a part in wanting to excel. Marcella, another top player, also mentioned having a collection of newspaper clippings and articles.

Another form of anticipatory socialization is seen in the recruitment of multiple members of the same family. Several members of the team had older sisters who played in previous years. Yvette, for one, attributed her participation to the urgings of her sister who was a standout on an earlier team: "She said, 'Oh, go out for it.' And I go, 'alright,' and I got interested. I guess just having a sister older than you being into sports [got me started.]"

A further instance of the intertwining of family traditions with the winning tradition of the team was encountered at the hockey banquet. Miss

Sharp pointed out an 8-year-old girl whose older sister was on the team. For 2 years, the little girl has had her own cut-off hockey stick and has already gone along with the team to a clinic. Three of the players have younger siblings who act as the team's mascots and come to the games in appropriate costumes. As one player said, "It's neat. They come up to you and they hug you, 'Oh, we won the game.' If you lose, they go, 'Oh, it's okay.' They hug you anyway; it's neat." Younger sisters are beginning a long-term relationship with the team; today's mascots may be tomorrow's players.

THE PLAYERS AND THE TRADITION

It seems that a primary attraction to hockey for players is the team's winning tradition. Every girl with whom we talked emphasized this aspect as being significant. One girl said, "The year before I went out, when I was in eighth grade, the hockey team won the CIF southern section. Everybody went 'Las Fumes] won.' I said, 'I gotta try this sport,' ya know." Having tried hockey as well as other sports since coming to high school, she still singled out the attraction of the victorious tradition: "I like hockey better [as a game], but the winning part just adds a little to it." Another girl noted that the winning created greater interest and enthusiasm on the part of all players.

With various sports being available to high school girls, recruitment of top athletes becomes a challenge. Girls who are athletically inclined may choose to specialize in one or another sport. Miss Sharp notes this occurrence at Las Fumes, saying that initially she had very few girls coming out for hockey, but after the team won their first CIF championship, the sport became more popular and recruiting was no longer a problem. Jane, one of the team's better players, confirmed this:

I think I'm better in basketball than in hockey and I think I would have gone further, since they started that women's professional league for basketball and everything, and you could go on past college. Hockey, after college you just kinda go into clubs or coaching, but still I liked them both the same, really. But then, I'd love to be on a really winning hockey team and have a good time . . . [rather] than be on a really losing basketball team.

Beyond looking at the way in which the winning tradition has helped to draw players to the team, it is possible to see its effect on their performance once they have joined the team. In general, their dedication to winning serves to enhance the players' performances as members of the team. One of the ways in which this is so is seen in the fact that the girls, out of a sense of pride in team membership, refine their technical skills by attending hockey clinics. According to one player, "Mostly everybody on our team goes to field hockey camp every year. That's one of the main reasons for us winning so much is that we spend our own time and money. We're that enthusiastic about it." This enthusiasm is so strong that some players have attended as many as four hockey camps in a single year. Moreover, even freshmen and

junior varsity players, who might be expected to show less commitment, have attended these clinics away from home.

Although virtually all players might be expected to attend the local camp arranged by Miss Sharp, it is surprising to see the number of participants from Las Fumes at more expensive camps that require being away from home for as much as a week. For girls from working-class families, this not only represents a financial burden but also a break with traditional family expectations. Enrollment is facilitated by Miss Sharp's endorsement and the awarding of scholarships by the camp organizers. One important California clinic gave 6 of its 12 scholarships to players from LFHS. Even when these scholarships are not available, a good indicator of the girls' commitment is the fact that several worked to pay their clinic tuition. One girl suggested that, because her grades fell when she worked, the only legitimate reason to do so was to pay for clinics.

There are several tangible results that derive from attending these clinics. In the first place, the girls learn proper techniques of exercise and physical conditioning. This is important in a game as arduous as hockey. Second, they polish their individual skills, such as stick work, under the tutelage of a variety of coaches. The goalie mentioned getting specialized instruction in skills related to her position. Contrary to the usual instructional situation in which the goalie is "just kind of in the background," at one clinic she "learned about twelve drills that just the goalie could do, and it really helped me a lot." Finally, the players come into contact with assorted mentors at these clinics. At a Long Beach State camp, one freshman player was introduced to several well-known university and American national hockey team coaches.

Merely having a hockey clinic available and attending it does not guarantee an improvement of performance. There is also a motivational element to be considered. One coach who has run numerous hockey clinics has described Las Fumes girls as "very eager to learn." He has said this contrasted sharply with the "rich, beach" girls who "already know everything." Miss Sharp recounted an episode in which the team had been especially receptive to the instruction of an outside coach during a Christmas vacation clinic. She was certain that the diligence of the girls arose from their having lost the game immediately preceding the vacation. This was only the second league game they had lost in as many years. Miss Sharp had gotten angry with the team, telling them that their only hope for a successful season was in improving dramatically during the vacation clinic. They all worked very hard and ultimately captured the league championship. The players saw the single loss as a major dishonor, calling for renewed commitment and sacrifice.

If the winning tradition improves players' individual performances, it also produces attitudes conducive to the cohesiveness of the team. The two major attitudes we found were a "willingness to sacrifice" and a "spirit of togetherness." Beginning with the sacrifice, we have previously mentioned players being willing to take jobs and sustain injuries. The latter should not

be underrated in a sport as physically risky as hockey. One player noted, "One time in the middle of hockey last year, I counted; I had twenty bruises on one leg." Another player had her leg broken by being hit with a ball in a practice session. In general, the girls seemed willing to sacrifice their time and efforts to play at the expected level. Miss Sharp commented, "You know, they can't take after-school jobs. And they have to give up things, some of the social life." This was echoed in the statements of several girls who mentioned feeling restricted in the activities they could undertake inside and outside school. One respondent suggested that devotion to the hockey team prevented players from having steady boyfriends.

Finally, we want to look at the way the winning tradition has created a strong spirit of togetherness, a togetherness that seems to be instrumental in achieving further victories (Nixon, 1977; Williams & Hacker, 1982). Teamwork on the field of play is the most palpable product of this togetherness. Rather than individual stars competing with one another for athletic glory, LFHS hockey players cooperate to attain collective goals. Miss Sharp feels her biggest challenge is "getting the personalities to work together." With the help of the tradition, she unexpectedly managed to unify one of her LFHS teams.

They're playing volleyball [in physical education class] now, and the material is there, but they just aren't winning. Last year we had the same problem, but they managed to shake it off and leave it behind when they came into hockey. But you could feel it at first. Last year I thought they would be bad. But the girls came in and I was surprised. They wanted to live up to the dynasty. And we made first place again. . . . The girls all said that they wanted to keep up the tradition.

This emphasis on togetherness and the ways in which it works is reflected in the statements of the players.

Hockey's different from other sports. People change when they get into hockey. All of a sudden we're all a team, 'cause we're all out to win CIF, 'cause we all know we can and everybody helps everybody else. . . . Everybody's congratulating everybody and complimenting you on your play. That's the way it seems like in hockey.

When asked to compare hockey specifically to volleyball, this same girl pointed out the subtle difference in volleyball that people "wanted to win, but they don't want to play together to win." She explained,

The same people that play volleyball, play hockey. And when they're in volleyball, they fight and don't get along so well. Then when they get into hockey, everyone goes together. They all play together and they're the best of friends. They change. It changes them.

When a team is genuinely unified, it implies that players will perform unselfishly. It is much more important to them how the team fares than

whether they achieve the signal honor of scoring a goal. The brightest individual offensive star on the LFHS team evinces this: "What I really enjoy is setting up a play and seeing a score come." Another player with a primarily defensive position feels no less identification with a score:

It's just that when they score a goal, you know that you're part of that goal, that you helped to get that little ball down there. Even though maybe Belinda scored it or Yvette or somebody actually pushed it in, you're a part of it. It's the team thing that gets me.

Togetherness also leads these players to stress the emotionally supportive role they play for one another. This notion was expressed by virtually all players: one should not criticize, but console. It is necessary to absolve and uplift those who are down because of some error they feel they have made. One player was asked whether team members began to blame each other during losses.

No! Never! Kara, that's the varsity goalie, she let the one in that won the game. She was really down. She was blaming it on herself, but everybody came and they kind of picked her up. They didn't say, "Oh, yeah! It was your fault!" They said, "No, it wasn't, Kara. We should have been back there." We help each other through it.

This togetherness takes several forms on the LFHS hockey team. In the first place, most members of the team are friends with one another off the field. They describe themselves as "one big, happy family." Thus, they discuss hockey in the off season and anticipate its beginning. One said,

We talk about it all the time. Like practically every day 'cause we all kind of hang around together. That's all we talk about. Like right now, 'cause next Monday starts regular practice. And we're all hyped up about it 'cause we know we've got a really good team this year.

Togetherness also looms large as part of the preparation for a game. As one team member expressed it, a player not only gets ready for a game jointly with other players but also, in her imagination, appears to equate winning with cooperating with her teammates.

The night before, the day before at practice, you're just thinking you want to win it; you want to work with your teammates. At lunch time, we'll all get together and say, "Oh! We're gonna beat 'em" or maybe not even go that far, we'll just say, "We'll have to do this or that to beat 'em."

Last, when they emerge victorious, the team celebrates together. The initial excitement can be very strong after big games. After one year's CIF triumph, for instance, "we were all in a big circle holding hands. Everyone went wild for about five minutes. We were screaming and jumping up and down. It was great. We were just going crazy for about five minutes." After

this, the girls will often spend the rest of the day together: “We’re all excited, ‘Oh! Let’s go eat some pizza at Roaring 20’s.’ We’ll all stay together for that whole day, or sometimes even spend the day at somebody’s house [or] overnight; go eat pizza or donuts.” This collective celebration and the hockey banquet are the last seasonal rituals that express the cohesion of the team. They affirm the value of striving for excellence in playing and point forward to the next season.

CONCLUSION

Winning is certainly the paramount value on this high school team. It has as its context a history of victorious play in the past and the prospect of its continuation into the future. Players identify with the team and its winning tradition. In the team context, however, what is understood is that these winning ways can only be achieved through team play, the hard work of physical conditioning, self-discipline in improving one’s specialized skills, mutual support, and personal sacrifice. In a sense, underlying the reverence for competition and victory is this whole series of cooperative commitments. On a day-to-day basis, it is these cooperative beliefs and practices that are foremost in the minds of the players.

This case study is, admittedly, focused on a distinctive sport situation. Girls high school field hockey is an amateur sport that has no professional or occupational outlets other than coaching, is organized largely under the control of women, and emphasizes team play. Crone (1999) suggested, however, that where there is an emphasis on winning, where extrinsic rewards are available, and where bureaucratic control is extensive, sport moves toward the “dark side.” In the present context, we found a very powerful concern with winning among the players, substantial control through adult decision makers (coaches) and the bureaucratic rules of various athletic associations, and a range of extrinsic rewards held out to successful participants. Among these rewards, we would include school and community recognition, “little extras” such as new uniforms and accessible hockey clinics, and the possibility of continuing one’s education and one’s hockey career beyond high school.

We found little or no evidence that these three conditions—emphasis on winning, extrinsic rewards, and bureaucratization—led to a significant negative result for team members. In fact, it seems that many of the positive aspects of participation for individual players are enhanced by the stress on winning. For example, the recognition they gain and the possibility of going on to college seem to be improved by the performance of the team as a whole. Moreover, the dedication, sacrifice, and team cooperation are heightened by the ultimate goal of attaining a championship. Finally, it is clear that fun and fair play are not neglected in the pursuit of victory.

There is, of course, much evidence that the negative consequences of the win-at-all-costs attitude do occur for some sports and some participants. Yet, what our research suggests is that further specification of conditions is required to clarify whether the consequences of an emphasis on winning are negative or positive. Without a winning tradition, school and community

recognition and college prospects might be difficult to attain for the female, largely working-class, and Latin American student/athletes at LFHS.

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VIEW

NEW TIMES, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND CYBERSPACE

Synthia Sydnor

At the end of spring 2001, I represented the History Academy at the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) Academies Workshop. The NASPE Workshop took place at the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) annual convention; in a 4-hour session, panelists from all of the NASPE academies (biomechanics, exercise physiology, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, motor development, and curriculum and instruction) were to discuss “knowledge, competencies, applications and strategies” for youth sport/physical education. Along with the other panelists, I was charged with “combining the academy discipline areas to enhance professional practice in youth sport and physical activity programs.”

Based on a few previous experiences at AAHPERD conventions, I realized that as the History Academy representative, the talk that was likely expected of me should deal with one or a combination of topics focused on (a) how we learn from the past, (b) the neglected sport or physical education history of specific groups or individuals, and (c) a biography of some little known yet heroic AAHPERD-associated athlete/physical educator. Because I am not an expert in accomplishing these, I prepared comments for the workshop based on my recent work.

I wanted to emphasize to the audience, who were university academics as well as K-12 physical educators and coaches, that history is concerned not solely with the past but also with understanding and troubling the ongoing documentation, preservation, and interpretation of “present-day” history (e.g., Culler, 1988; White, 1978). Sports historians can historicize what is “to be” in the history of health, fitness, and physical activity. That is, historians are constantly aware of the history that is being made around them every day, and they seek to preserve and critically analyze the contemporary evidence of this history in a myriad of ways. At the same time that I attempted to put before my audience ways to reenvision history, I also tried to insert other logics for conceptualizing physical education that open up when examining the state of physical education from the standpoint of a posthistorian.

In my talk, I noted that as physical educators, we should consider the past decade’s proliferation of the World Wide Web, video, computer, online, virtual, simulation and cyber games, sports, and play as a unique moment in the history of the world. Exercise sites, network and multiplayer gaming, online gambling, fantasy-team competitions, virtual participation in real

sport events, exercise chat groups, celebrity-athlete “stalker” sites, the latest scores, recruiting, sport news and statistics, and sales of online exercise clothing and equipment spawn millions of daily Internet hits. There are enhanced technologies in photography, super-slow-motion film, and holography. Physical educators and coaches of youth are obliged to understand reality as experienced not only directly but also through immersion in filtered, enhanced, distorted mediation of the Internet, editors, creators, and artists. Sports competitions of all sorts are the object of a spectrum of lens—that is, from youth games—where the stands are filled with parents adjoined to video cameras, computer game contests, and role-playing in which players view spaces through data streams. Video artists create fragmented, blurred, gorgeously colored and musically choreographed rushes of sport scenes for advertisements that provide opportunities for aesthetic experiences for students of physical education. Photography, videography, literature, and cinematography (in journalism, television, film, personal computing, music videos, and advertising) are as much sites of physical education today as are traditional exercise sites, such as the biomechanics lab or the football field.

Although such modes of recreation-sport-fitness represent an enormous historic and cultural change in the way millions of children play, they have not been interpreted very deeply by professional organizations such as AAHPERD and NASPE, except to criticize these complex narratives in simple ideological ways such as through studying themes of violence, sexism, racism, alienation, and consumerism that are illuminated in them and from which physical educators are to safeguard their students. Critics also point out how tragic it is that in these technological, televisual times, we are a world of sickly watchers and voyeurs instead of healthy doers; others seek to raise awareness about “issues related to the way in which technology is becoming increasingly overwhelming within sports.”¹

I suggested in my NASPE academies workshop presentations that such virtual and simulated contest, sport, play, and “physicality” are perhaps not negative or overwhelming but a cultural adaptation to the world that we live in, a world that Lévi-Strauss called a “hot society” (1966, p. 233; Slowikowski Sydnor, 1993, p. 1) committed to ever-moving change. That youth are extremely involved and fascinated in such simulation and virtual reality is a kind of cultural response to the world we now must live and survive in—the world as sophisticated video game, speeding through an agglomeration of images, interspaciality, screens, and keyboards. Sutton-Smith (1986), and earlier also Roberts, Arth, and Bush in their classic “Games in Culture” article (1959), argued this point almost half a century ago: Things that occur in a regular, universal fashion are enculturating or selectively useful for human survival—to individual and cultural well-being. More recently, Mark Pesce, in an excellent ground-breaking work, *The Playful World: How Technology Is Transforming Our Imagination* (2000), claimed that because of the new technologies and the Internet, humans play in entirely new ways, ways that we would not have conceived of just a few

generations ago, ways that would have once been considered magical. Pesce said of the Web,

Never in the course of human history has any innovation taken hold so rapidly or so completely . . . it draws millions of us in, day after day, offering an endless exploration of the catalogue of humanity, all its stories and wishes and horrors and facts. Every day it becomes more indispensable, more unforgettable, more important. And it is not even ten years old. (p. 170)

The Web, argued Pesce, “will create new forms of culture and require us to learn a new language; our own languages can’t quite cope with the confusion of tongues, mixed meanings, and ambiguities.” A present-day example is “the incredible power of the PlayStation 2 [which] opens the door to entirely new types of computer simulations, works of art, education and forms of play that we’ve only just begun to imagine” (p. 213).

What does this all have to do with history and applications to youth sport and physical education? I am still thinking about how to answer this, for the broad and deep intellectual change lying in the nature of contemporary life itself calls for new transdisciplinary tools adequate for the task of analyzing it. As a start, I attempt now to briefly overview some of the sweeping questions I raised at the AAHPERD convention surrounding the historical and cultural context of such virtual physical education as it exists in the culture of children.

I wonder, at this moment in time, in terms of cultural adaptation, is expertise in virtual and simulated reality more important than is fitness, sport, and physical education as we traditionally teach, measure, and envision them? In terms of virtual alternative sport, the cyberworlds of children’s sport, are its representations, discourse, and therapy for related injuries to be made into policy and possessed by physical educators? For example, video game technologies bring forth hand injuries such as repetitive stress syndrome, carpal-tunnel syndrome, and “nintenditous.” Could physical education classes work on making hands stronger and more adaptable to screen play? And conversely, playing videogames such as *Gran Turismo*, *3Xtreme*, and *Spyro the Dragon* has been found by some doctors to successfully treat children suffering from attention deficit disorder (Menduno, 2001, p. 78). Are projects like these legitimate endeavors for national bodies like AAHPERD and NASPE? There are already countless video and arcade games/experiences in which the child’s body is interfaced (through keyboard, cathode screen, data glove, data suit, or machine) to an extreme sport contest/performance that they never play in real life. In this way, the philosopher Paul Virilio in *Open Sky* (1997) called the body the last urban frontier: “Having been first mobile, then motorized, man will thus become motile, deliberately limiting his body’s area of influence to a few gestures, a few impulses, like channel-surfing” (p. 17) How do professionals of physical education, health, recreation, and dance approach such bodies in the history of human community? And how then are these bodies narrated historically?

Historians can do history in new times in significant ways that might differ from the earlier ways of applying history to physical education and sport (such as the typical recreation of Olympic games cross-disciplinary lesson that involves students studying the history, literature, and art of the ancient Olympics at the same time as they stage a pseudo-Olympic games). There are many facets to such an undertaking (that is, doing history in valuable ways and applying it to the sport and physical education of our youth), but one beginning is simply to contemplate the Internet as a huge space in which history is not only being made and circulated but where the average surfer is immediately privy to such archives, primary evidence, and sources as the historian has never seen before (e.g., Hine, 2000). Based on historian Robert Darnton's (1999) proposal of a new form of "doing" history that would "exploit the unique attributes of electronic communications instead of merely imitating the flat, traditional world of print" (Givler, 1999, p. 6), we might begin to explore how physical education students of all ages could be involved in the composition of multimedia illustrations, 3-D imaging, performances, and game design and robot wars in physical education classes. And to take a further step, we could consider revolutionizing future physical education and youth sport into—as Virilio (1997) said—motile channel-surfing-like activities, as echoed in a sign posted in a gaming area in Seattle, "STOP PLAYING COMPUTER GAMES, ENTER THEM." (My University's National Center for Supercomputing Applications, along with my department [Kinesiology] and several others, recently was successful in procuring the construction of the world's largest six-sided virtual reality chamber, which could be used for such a venture.) Such a project suggests theoretical and methodological questions of framing and scrutinizing history as it might be applied to youth sport and physical education in our posthistory and more (e.g., Bergson, 1991).

Do humans need to procure physical, sport, and health education through public and private physical education classes as we know them today? Furthermore, in our new forms of culture, languages, our new intelligences, and engineered structures in which the body may be erased—our history to be—do we even culturally need our current forms of youth physical education and sport?

Inspired by the transformation of our world in the past decade, artists and athletes are mastering techniques and environments to express sport, move, play, and contest in novel ways and venues. Some brief examples are the following: robots that play underwater hockey with humans. At an art museum in New York City, free-form ping-pong in which the table has four sides, all rounded, with a lily pond in the middle. Visitors to the art museum are encouraged to play this sport, in which the shape of the playing field encourages invention of rules and simultaneous violation of them. Or, choreographers and sportspersons have created spaces on cliff sides in national parks on which dancers use the apparatus and skills of rock climbers to perform for audiences composed of park goers. Sky surfing, too, is a huge historical change in the way humans compete, not only for its terrain, but also the

sky surfing score is determined by the video that is created by the camera flyer as the sky surfer performs.

If such museum, graphic, and cultural displays shatter the old ways that we stay fit, play, sport, and move, and are thus the “stuff” of history, the question, “How does the historian frame the themes, analysis, and content of such a history?” comes to mind. And should we, and if so how can we, involve our children in such imaginative physical ventures that go far beyond what we currently teach and expect in physical education classes (Virtual and alternative sport, the cyberworlds of sport)? How are its representations and narrative discourse to be made into sport history? And is this a legitimate undertaking for the sports historian?

For example, that sport serves enormously as inspiration for youth fashion and couture that is imaged in video, virtual, and simulated images is a straightforward example of a topic that could be further considered by scholars. Sports historians might trace and interpret the present-day aesthetics of “old-school athletic prep” or “next millennial tech,” which seem to saturate our transnational youth communities. How and why do the aesthetics of past sport come to decorate the future in segments of culture other than in the originating sport and vice versa (i.e., the naïve use of Nazi iconography on sports equipment and virtual games)?

Scholars such as Robert Rinehart (1998) and Charles Springwood (1995) have worked in this vein to decenter grand canonical narratives of sport by other readings of histories of sport. For instance, I have heard sport historians say that extreme, alternative sports such as skateboarding are “trash sport,” not “real” sport, and thus not the terrain of our study and application. Sport historians “to be” might create histories of the physical inventions, evolution, materials, and technologies of these alternative/folk/extreme/X sports and sports’ equipment of the current day, as our youth are the practitioners of these folk sports being birthed before our eyes.

Consider also the future use of retinal implants, inner-ear speakers, and subdermal implants that will enable the wearer to receive sports news and broadcasts, optimally play a sport in real time, and virtually engage in sport. If our young citizens spectate and play sport in such a way, what are the themes, content, methodologies, and theories to be used by the historian of such sport?

To begin to answer some of the questions I pose, I think that we must unsettle and broaden the definition of “sport,” “physical education,” and even “cyberspace.” Of what are these constituted in the new millennium? How are they to be studied by historians? For example, Robert Nirre (2001) wrote of the myth of cyberspace:

What is this, exactly? Clearly it isn’t amenable to our spatial understanding. There is neither a physical nor even a conceptual space. There are places but nothing between them, no interspatiality; one navigates a sprawling agglomeration of webbed-together billboards, of insides without exteriors, of islands of hyperdense information adrift on etherealized seas. (p. 3)

I realize that virtual/cyber sport and physical education and their potentials for idealizing and reconstituting communities, bodies, and landscapes can be lionized with, as Nirre said, “fantastic powers.” Nirre pointed out the nostalgia that people have for cyber environments constructed of “dream landscapes” (p. 9), cautioning that cyberspace is a “myth revealed for what it was: a poignant imaginative lunge that illuminates exactly what will be denied us. A nostalgia for a world that will never come to be” (p. 9).

In the span of the history of human community of the past 10,000 years, it is only barely in the past 300 years that we have invented the idea that human life should and can be prolonged and enriched and that one of the ways we should accomplish this is through youth physical education/sport. Although I am not an expert on exactly and technically how we might now revolutionize or discard that idea, I have tried to overview some ways that we can wonder about transforming and challenging conventional youth physical education and sport practices, and I have layered around that wondering my ideas about what this means for historians of sport and physical education.

NOTE

1. This is the February 20, 2001, stated intent of the listserv Forum for the Analysis of Sport Technology (FAST). See <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/In/fast>.

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