

they were able). This group, rather than individual, reciprocity also allowed exchanges of help to feel less instrumental. The book thus makes an important contribution to literatures on both poverty and social capital: it is good to know that poverty does not make longer-term relationships of reciprocal assistance impossible and that an organization can facilitate poor people's ability to help themselves and each other.

I have a few quibbles with the book's approach: Mazelis sometimes uses academic buzzwords where more substantive vocabulary would be helpful (e.g., I wondered about relationships, acquaintances, and friends, not just "ties") and might give "neoliberalism" more direct causal power than is entirely accurate. But my main critique of the book is that I wanted more: in its effort to make its contribution about how "sustainable ties" were built, it does not give much empirical or theoretical attention to the other sociologically important aspects of KWRU as an organization. Much of what KWRU accomplished for its members went beyond sustainable ties: Mazelis reports that KWRU took over abandoned houses for its members, received substantial funding to rent additional houses for members, and organized protests to help members get needed benefits. While all of these accomplishments were possible because poor people worked together, they are not the kind of direct exchange Mazelis means by "sustainable ties" and might have lessons for (and from) studies of social movements as well.

Mazelis is careful throughout the book not to overstate what we can know from comparing non-KWRU members to members; the two groups were different in many ways, most centrally that KWRU members generally had experienced even severer poverty than nonmembers, which is often what led them to turn to the organization in the first place. The book nonetheless provides a compelling account of how KWRU members' lives would likely have been worse without KWRU and that much of what KWRU provided was these sustainable ties. Mazelis argues that if social service agencies adapted some of KWRU's policies and practices around reciprocity, they could both increase their reach and help empower those in poverty.

Midnight Basketball: Race, Sports, and Neoliberal Social Policy. By Douglas Hartmann. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2016. Pp. xiv + 259. \$105 (cloth); \$35 (paper).

David Leonard
Washington State University

In recent years, midnight basketball has become as much a part of the collegiate landscape as March Madness, the swoosh, and exploitation. Kicking off the season each year, midnight basketball is part celebration, part pep rally, and part commercial. While no longer happening as the clocks strikes 12 (profits increase at a more reasonable hour), the symbolic power of midnight basketball is clear.

Not so long ago, midnight basketball neither took place on a college campus nor was it associated with big-time college hoops. Not shown on ESPN or orchestrated by multimillionaire coaches, the original midnight basketball took place in cold, rundown gyms in urban centers throughout the nation.

Alongside calls for “law and order,” an increasingly militarized police force, and government-wide structural adjustment programs, midnight basketball emerged as a social welfare policy that galvanized Republicans and Democrats, media pundits and athletes, sports recreation managers, and (black) ballers alike. Whereas parks and recreation suffered, alongside job training programs, education, and health care, midnight basketball, with its promise of keeping “gangsta,” “thugs,” and social pariahs off the street and on the court, gained traction.

Doug Hartmann’s *Midnight Basketball: Race, Sports, and Neoliberal Policy* sets out to understand the emergence of this program in the 1980s, the fanfare surrounding it, and its quick demise. He sets out “to tell the story, or perhaps solve the puzzle, of why a basketball program because such a popular prominent solution to the problems of crime and risk and social dislocation in urban America in early 1990s” (p. 197). In using a singular case study, Hartmann successfully chronicles the interface between sport, race, neoliberal policy, the criminal justice system, and the broader history of sports interventionist policies.

Heeding the historical signposts, Hartman repels a story of the court, even as a source of pleasure (p. 195), of the utility of basketball as a social policy, and of the possibility of sport “for purposes of social intervention and risk prevention” (p. 19). While dispelling narratives that represented midnight basketball as “able to control lawlessness and reduce risk” (p. 18), to be the cultural or sporting tool in the crime fighting toolbox, Hartmann is more concerned with why midnight basketball captivated the nation, from Washington, D.C., to media hubs, from urban centers to the sporting world and its long-standing racial implications.

At its core, *Midnight Basketball* offers a cultural autopsy of the rise and fall of a social program. “My argument is that midnight basketball is the product of a historic set of ideas about the relationship among sport, young people of color, and social intervention that are given new life and form in the context of the neoliberal transformation of American social policy that coalesced in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century,” writes Hartmann (p. 12).

Such programs are nothing new; they are part of a long-standing American tradition of seeing sports as a vehicle to “help,” “assimilate,” and provide the necessary skills to those undesirables not fulfilling the promises of American exceptionalism. According to Hartmann, “The cultural appeal of midnight basketball (and all such sports-oriented crime prevention programming) went well beyond that of a simple diversion and distraction. The initiative was also part of a longer, larger, and venerable American tradition of using sport for purposes of social intervention for youth, especially young men from communities of color and contexts of disadvantage. These ideals were clearly in play

for the entire midnight basketball crowd. Terms like 'self-esteem building,' and 'self-respect,' as well as 'teamwork,' 'hard-work' and 'community,' were peppered throughout media" (p. 53).

Evident here, midnight basketball would become a staging ground for recycling theories of black cultural pathology, justifying divestment and hyper policing, and otherwise blaming *black problems* on black bodies.

Hartmann makes clear that the story of midnight basketball is a story specific to the 1980s and the 1990s. It emerges from the ashes of social policy that left communities in ruins; its popularity rests with the embrace of the war on drugs and mass incarceration. Amid the Reagan revolution and the systemic divestment from social programs, midnight basketball gained traction. According to Hartmann, this is of little surprise given midnight basketball's embrace of the logics of neoliberalism and its rhetorical focus on sports as a socializing agent of discipline and positive work ethic.

Evident in Hartmann's completed puzzle entitled *Midnight Basketball*, the answer, while complex, is also very simple. The rise of the policy, like the spectacle surrounding it and its ultimate demise, rests with antiblack racism. The program itself, the justifications, and the media discourses treated "African American men . . . as the problem to be address[ed]" (p. 33). Moreover, "their problems tended to be seen and understood in very particular and, from a . . . problematic kind of way" (p. 33). Erasing history, structural inequalities, and persistent racism, midnight basketball rose to prominence through narratives of black deficiency, undisciplinarity, and cultural dysfunction.

It is no wonder such a program found so many supporters. Midnight basketball exonerated the state while preserving whiteness as both desirable and savior; it allowed for the deployment of racial ideas while maintaining silence about race and racism (p. 35); and it ultimately reinforced antiblack narratives of pathology and criminality, seemingly identifying the causes of "black failure" and the benevolence of whiteness in the same program.

Among the many strengths of *Midnight Basketball* is that it moves beyond the court and the policy, as a window into the 1980s, demonstrating the interconnections between sport, neoliberal, deindustrialization, structural adjustments, and racism. It is as much a story on the devastating consequences of Reagan and the resurgent "new right" and on the prison industrial complex and war on drugs as it is a story on basketball programs "serving" black youth.

It also offers a powerful template and discussion of methods. Throughout the book, but especially in the concluding chapters, Hartmann provides a thoughtful discussion of his research framework and approach, peeling back the curtains on the process, thinking, and challenges in this research. In addition to shaping the discussion of midnight basketball, this part of the book should serve as a template for other scholars working on a myriad of issues.

Its self-reflectivity and transparency move beyond the traditional and sometimes clichéd explanations of methodological and theoretical choices. It is about producing work that can be impactful and interventionist: "This

project has been much more than fact-finding, description, and storytelling. It has also been a project of sociological analysis and interpretation,” writes Hartmann. “That is to say, it has been about situating midnight basketball in its appropriate social and theoretical contexts and trying to grasp what is both productive and problematic about it, as well as about using midnight basketball as a lens into key dimensions of racialized neoliberal political culture and public policy and the opportunities for sport-based social intervention” (p. 197).

Elucidating and reflecting on the importance of interdisciplinary work, Hartmann is able to get the most dynamic story from not just media accounts, policy documents, and interviews with participants but through a myriad of sources specific to and beyond midnight basketball.

At first glance, the celebration of the start of college basketball and a program based in midnight basketball leagues as a crime fighting solution have nothing in common. Yet through Hartmann’s powerful examination, we can see how each focuses on disciplining black bodies; each uses black bodies as sources of commodification; each carries narratives about blackness, whiteness, the state, and savior institutions; each tells a story about the shifting landscape beneath our feet, reminding us, yet again, that sports are always bigger than the game.