‘Lifting the Veils and Illuminating the Shadows’: Furthering the Explorations of Race and Ethnicity in Sport Management

Ketra L. Armstrong
California State University, Long Beach

This essay provides a general introduction to and foundation for the scholarly explorations of how race and ethnicity impact Sport Management. Briefly discussed are the changing portraits of racial and ethnic demography, the conceptual treatments of race and ethnicity, and the methodological challenges and research imperatives. This essay also offers a brief summary of the trends in research on race and ethnicity in Sport Management, and it provides an integrated overview of the scholarship featured in this Special Issue which (in varied ways) explicate the salience of race and ethnicity to Sport Management practices, and to the experiences of sport employees, athletes, and sport marketing and media consumers.

‘Portraits’ of Race and Ethnicity: From a ‘Melting Pot’ to a ‘Kaleidoscope’

Race and ethnicity are “ingredients of the social institutions of our nation” (Higginbotham & Andersen, 2009, pg. 3). . . . and “are part of social structure…people live within a system of race and ethnic relations, but race and ethnic relations also live within us” (. p. 113). Hartman (1999) indicated likewise in his contention that race and ethnicity are organizing principles of social life “affecting or implicating everyone in society” (p. 26). Omi and Winant (2009) remarked that a “racial etiquette” (p. 20) exists such that there are interpretive codes and meanings that influence how we interact and operate in society. Sowell (1983) added that race and ethnicity also affects social structures and assertions of group superiority and inferiority. Healey (2009) proclaimed:

Our immigrant heritage and cultural diversity have made us a nation of both groups and individuals. Some of us feel intensely connected to the groups to which we belong and identify closely with our heritage. For others, the group connection is tenuous and distant. Either way, our group memberships influence our lives and perceptions. They help to shape who we are and how we fit into the larger society (p. 9).

Not only have race and ethnicity had profound implications for cultural and social relations in general (Schreiber, 2001), but they have also impacted the social and cultural pedigree that influences opportunities and experiences in sport and thus, the management thereof. Racial and ethnic issues have long ‘plagued’ the institution of sport, as demonstrated by the storied histories of racial and ethnic prejudice, discrimination, exclusion, and exploitation targeted to People of Color (Coakley, 2007; Edwards, 2010; Evans, 2001; Sammons, 1994). “As people make sense of sports and give meaning to their experiences as athletes and spectators and the experiences of others, they often take into account skin color and ethnicity” (Coakley, 2007, p. 282).

Schaefer (2009) asked the question: What metaphor do we use to describe nations “whose racial, ethnic, and religious minorities are now becoming numerical majorities in cities coast-to-coast….and….the tapestry of racial and ethnic groups is always close at hand wherever one is. . . .” (p. 206)? The ‘melting pot’ was a longstanding descriptor which inferred a blending of racial and ethnic differences into a harmonious ‘stew’ (Akiner, 1997; Schaefer, 2009; Weinberg, 1995). This assimilationist perspective continues to be a dominant theme in the social theorizing of race and ethnicity (Peagin & Feagin, 2009).

Much of the work on assimilation has been attributed to the work of Gordon (1964). Feagin and Feagin summarized the work of Gordon (1964) claiming that he offered three competing images of assimilation: (a) melting pot, (b) cultural pluralism, and (c) Anglo-conformity. They also summarized the seven ways Gordon indicated that most immigrants sought to confirm to the core of Anglo culture: (a) cultural assimilation, in which immigrant cultural patterns were changed to fit those of the core society; (b) structural assimilation, which pertained to the group level penetration of immigrants into core associations of society; (c) marital assimilation as depicted in intermarriages; (d) identification assimilation, regarding immigrants’ developing a sense of identity with the core society; (e) attitude-receptional assimilation, which refers to an absence of prejudice or stereotyping; (f) behavior-receptional assimilation, which refers to the absence of intentional discrimination, and (g) civic assimilation, which refers to an absence of value and power conflict.
While the spirit of assimilation purports that different groups come together to contribute to a common culture, thereby reflecting an egalitarian process that emphasizes inclusion, the ideals of assimilation have not been realized for many People of Color (Healey, 2009). Healey described the melting pot metaphor as one where “the brew has a distinctly Anglo-centric flavor” (p. 50) that exerts a pervasive influence over the dominant culture and the systems therein. Subsequently, some theorists reject the assimilationist perspective and endorse the perspective that most immigrants have not sought to “become substantially assimilated to a generic Anglo-Protestant or Euro-American identity and way of life” (Feagin & Feagin, 2009, p. 24) but have veered to a place of racial and ethnic pluralism, where their primary group ties have been maintained, and where salience of ethnicity persists in their value system, their self-consciousness, and in varied symbols of their identity (Feagin & Feagin). Thomas and Dyall (1999) avowed that most countries in the world are ethnically plural, and... “ethnic homogeneity in nations is the exception rather than the rule.” (p. 116). Consequently, the term ‘salad bowl’ was coined to reference how the distinct ingredients of race and ethnicity were maintained in an environment, with each offering its unique ‘taste’ to the cultured ‘mixture’ (Akiner, 1997; Weinberg, 1995). However, a more contemporary view of how to best describe the chemistry created by the intermingling of a diverse racial and ethnic tapestry was offered by Schaefer (2009). He concluded that the term ‘kaleidoscope’ was a useful metaphor in this regard, as it described a tool whereby changing and often bewildering images are mirrored in different colors and patterns. According to Schaefer, the term ‘People of Color’ was aptly captured in the kaleidoscope metaphor. Moreover, although sport was long thought to be a racial and ethnic ‘melting pot’, and a space of racial and ethnic harmony (reflective of the assimilationist perspective), the kaleidoscope is a much more fitting metaphor to describe the pluralism of contemporary racial and ethnic reflections of the experiences of People of Color who are involved in sport as employees, athletes, spectators, and affiliates.

Discerning Race and Ethnicity: ‘Cognitive Fuzzies and Conceptual Unclarities’

“Race is like obscenity in that people believe they know ‘it’ when they see it but when pressed for a definition cannot find an intelligent one” (Sammons, 1994, p. 205). According to Omi and Winant (2009): “The meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice. In the process, racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed and reformed” (p. 49). Hartman (1999, p. 26) offered the following propositions: (a) race is a fundamental principle of social stratification; (b) racial formations have ideological and cultural dimensions in addition to material-economic ones; (c) agency, resistance, and struggle are not in opposition to racial structures but are crucial components of them and of their reproduction and transformation; (d) race has critical, transformative potential with respect to both social-scientific theory and practice and the regular policies of social life.”

Davis (1992) postulated that descriptive terms of race, ethnicity, and minority are often used interchangeably. Although Davis made this claim in reference to the conceptual and methodological approaches to studying Black ethnicity, his sentiment is apropos to the manner in which research endeavors have used these terms to reference other individuals of Color. Davis offered some distinctive ways of conceptualizing these terms, indicating that: (a) race should be used to describe biological characteristics such as skin color, hair texture, etc., (b) minority should be used to reference the condition of subordination, and (c) ethnicity should address cultural similarities such as language, religion, values, and others.

Higginbotham and Anderson (2009) demonstrated the conceptual entanglements of the social construction of race and ethnicity. They deduced that since ethnic groups share and are united by a common culture, identity, religion, national origin, music, habits, socialization practices, or other characteristics, ethnic groups can become racialized. For when an ethnic group is thought of and defined as a race, the ethnic group becomes racialized. They also contend that multiple ethnicities can exist within a racial group (such as having Jamaicans, Haitians, among African Americans). Correspondingly, they also considered race as an ethnic group because racial groups generally share a common culture (i.e., African Americans are not only denoted as a racial group but also as an ethnic group).

Cornell and Hartman (2004) presented four complementary tendencies that have been evident to varying degrees as characteristic of the prevailing empirical treatment and conceptualizations of race and ethnicity. Some of Davis’ (1992) contentions are included in Cornell and Hartman’s (2004) summary classifications, which include the following: (a) race or ethnicity as a characteristic of individual persons, and the effect of such classification on subsequent experiences; (b) determining racial and ethnic categories based on instrumentalist (usefulness) or interest-based logic; (c) race as a social construction based on physiological differences and ethnicity as a social construction based on cultural differences, such that races became physically distinct groups and ethnic groups became culturally distinct groups; and (d) to subsume and intermix these phenomena such as either treating race as an element of ethnicity or treating ethnicity as a byproduct of race relations.

Cornell and Hartman (2004) also warned of the inherent problems with the aforementioned approaches. For instance, they argued that using race and ethnicity merely as characteristics does not adequately acknowledge the meaning, power, and consequences of the phenomena. They also deemed the instrumentalist perspective of race and ethnicity that reduces them to being "by-products of.
circumstantial dynamics’ and ‘precipitates of material conditions’ (pg. 27) problematic. From their perspective, this premise does not adequately explain similar yet differing situations and circumstances where race and ethnicity have been cast as a matter of privilege and empowerment such that race and ethnicity form the bases by which some groups choose to interpret and pursue their interests. Concerning the third trend noted, they asserted that the contention of a shared culture being the primal focus and bases of ethnicity is “an analytically clumsy concept” (p. 27). According to them, such supposition does not account for the other elements that define culture beyond ethnicity. Furthermore, to attribute culture solely to ethnicity would erroneously classify the myriad of associations that create and sustain culture (such as those based on our profession, education, social status, etc.) as ‘ethnicity.’ Lastly, regarding the fourth trend noted, Cornell and Hartman insisted that subsuming race and ethnicity with the other “has obscured both their differences and commonalities and reduced their analytical utility” (p. 27) as it promotes either splitting the constructs or collapsing them together.

Hitlin, Brown, and Elder (2007) conceded that social scientists are moving beyond essentialists notions of race and ethnicity. Cornell and Hartman (2004) opined likewise in their statement attesting to the evolution of scholars’ treatment of race as:

... both a foundational principle of social order and a comprehensive system of meanings that informs and shapes action... In this sense race and even ethnicity can be seen as part of a society’s ‘deep structure,’ by which we mean, in part, culture; that set of deeply embedded, taken for granted understandings through which, often unconsciously, much of social process moves and social outcomes are constructed. This approach, which still embraces the daily experience of inequality, grants to ethnicity and race a greater independence, power, and significance than traditional approaches have done, and it suggests that, analytically, race and ethnicity should be treated not so much as subfields... but as central and independently consequential social phenomena or forces and as key organizing concepts in the study of societies (p. 26-27).

Hitlin et al. (2007) also acknowledged the ‘tension’ between the analytical premises of race and ethnicity and properly conceptualizing the lived experiences of individuals who are less concerned with such analytical exercise. They note that scholars often highlight the constructed nature of race and ethnicity and yet, simultaneously separate them analytically. They argue that race and ethnicity are not analytically separate dimensions for respondents who are required to live in the spaces defined by those phenomena. Since work and play in sport generally occur in spaces that are predominately defined by an Anglocentric ambience, the nature of the sport experiences of People of Color do not typically require them to analytically separate or conceptually discern whether the effects were due to race or ethnicity. In addition, as Cornell and Hartman (2004) insisted, the critical focus should not necessarily be on whether the racial or the ethnic paradigm is operative in a given moment or situation, but on “the boundaries that they are asserting and contesting, the meanings and identities that are contained within those boundaries, and the broader implication of such boundary making and meaning making” (p. 36).

As illustrated, race and ethnicity are dynamic, complex, and multifaceted phenomena. Therefore, it is not my intent here to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of creating clear and distinct definitions of race and ethnicity or to settle the longstanding conceptual debates of which they are at the fore. Instead, the objectives of this part of the conversation are to: (a) inform the reader of the complexities, and (b) encourage the reader to embrace the merits of the collective blurring and blending of the boundaries of race and ethnicity—in what Hitlin et al. (2007) aptly described as a “cognitively fuzzy destination”... (p. 597).

**Race and Ethnic Inquiries: Methodological Challenges and Research Imperatives**

Ram, Starek, & Johnson (2004) claimed that the changing racio-ethnic demographics of society along with a heightened sociopolitical awareness of the salience of race, ethnicity, and culture to the human experience has necessitated the need for scientific inquiry to become more inclusive and less ethnocentrically focused on the European experience. Notwithstanding the conceptual blurring and blending of race and ethnicity, the inclusion of race and ethnicity as statistical/control variables in quantitative research is an indication of “disciplinary concern” (Hitlin et al., 2007, pg. 588) with the importance of these phenomena. Hitlin et al. also noted the inherent methodological paradox in this practice because “the ease of statistical controls offers the dangerous potential for reifying race as a category for social analysis without a concordant focus on what ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ mean” (p. 588). Hitlin et al. further asserted that ‘shallow’ conceptions of the distinction between race and ethnicity leads to methodological artifacts that can distort quantitative analyses. They maintain that statistically breaking apart the phenomena of race and ethnicity fragments the lived experiences of individuals who locate themselves along racial and ethnic lines.

Another methodological consideration when exploring race and ethnicity involves identifying the research participants. Self-categorization is the best way to discern/denote the race or ethnicity of individuals. Methodologies that do not employ the technique of self-categorization or self-identification complicate the process of obtaining ‘valid’ data concerning race and ethnicity. Nonetheless, due to the absence or limited access to People of Color...
Scraton depicted as one where “critical analyses locate in sport are at the space of a unique intersection that Consequently, Black women (and other women of Color) discourses of gender and class serve to construct and distorted ways that dominant groups have constructed which race may be intermixed with gender to influence race and ethnicity. She acknowledged the manner in research and methodological approaches to exploring ethnicity (Loue, 1999).

Factors that may have intervened to influence race and/or operationalized, and (d) address the social, economic, and political challenges may lead one to question the legitimacy of unclarities’ with methodological and epistemological considerations. Researchers are therefore encouraged to: (a) offer a clarification of the inclusion of race and/or ethnicity as research variables, (b) offer an explicit definition of race and/or ethnicity variables used in the research, (c) report the manner in which race and/or ethnicity was operationalized, and (d) address the social, economic, and political factors that may have intervened to influence race and/or ethnicity (Loue, 1999).

Scraton (2001) added another requisite layer in the research and methodological approaches to exploring race and ethnicity. She acknowledged the manner in which race may be intermixed with gender to influence the experiences of women of Color, and discussed “the distorted ways that dominant groups have constructed their assumptions and complexities, contradictions and power relations among different women” (p. 176). She asserted that ‘racialized’ discourses intertwined with discourses of gender and class serve to construct and represent Black women in particular ways” (p. 178). Consequently, Black women (and other women of Color) in sport are at the space of a unique intersection that Scraton depicted as one where “critical analyses locate within a patriarchal discourse that emphasizes gender, or a racial discourse that emphasizes race and ethnicity” (p. 178). Mirza (1997) described the theoretical premise of this space as “. . . a racial discourse, where the subject is male; in a gendered discourse, where the subject is white; and a class discourse, where race has no place” (p. 4). Therefore, Scraton (2001) acknowledged the need to ‘interrogate’ this complexity of women of Color’s positionality at the race-gender intersections to better understand their involvement in sport as well as their absence from it. Armstrong (2006) and Armstrong and O’Byrant (2007) also discussed the need for methodologies and explorations of how race and ethnicity influences the sport experiences of Women of Color to be undergirded with theoretical paradigms that celebrate the intersections of race, gender, class and other sociodemographic markers.

Another imperative for research on race and ethnicity is a critique of the media. Media messages and images help to shape our view of the world, influence our perceptions, and inform our values and the identities we create and seek to create. As Kellner (2003) acknowledged “we are immersed from cradle to grave in a media . . . and thus it is important to learn how to understand, interpret, and criticize its meanings and messages” (p. 9). According to Kellner, although members of different cultures undoubtedly may read, interpret, and respond to media texts and imagery differently, we cannot expect audiences to resist the ideologies encoded in the dominant media culture, and thus—he warns against the belief that audiences produce their own meanings rather than those conveyed in the media culture. Consequently, Kellner exclaimed the need to examine the dominant ideologies that are operative in the culture of media texts and imagery. Kellner’s premise was reiterated by Hall (2003):

The different media are especially important sites for the production, reproduction, and transformation of ideologies. . . . What they ‘produce’ is, precisely, representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works. . . . The media construct for us a definition of what race is, what meaning the imagery of race caries, and what the ‘problem of race’ is understood to be. They help to classify out the world in terms of the categories of race (p. 90).

Hall (2003) reminded us of the importance of discerning and distinguishing between ‘overt’ and ‘inferential’ racism. He considered overt racism to be blatant and openly racist statements and positions; and he defined inferential racism as “those apparently naturalized representations of events and situations relating to race, whether ‘factual’ or ‘fictional’, which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions” (p. 91). Inferential racism is posited to be more harmful and more dangerous than overt racism because it is more difficult to recognize and identify, yet it is also often more racially explicit in its intent (Fiske, 1996; Tudor, 1998). Hardin, Dodd, Change,
and Walsdorf (2004) articulated the consequences of inferential racism:

“They can shape the development of individual’s aspirations and opportunities. When media endorse racial difference, even subtly, they reinforce tendencies toward prejudice by the majority. However, inferential racism cannot be addressed without research that illuminates how it materializes in media products” (p. 213).

Sport media are not immune to overt and inferential racism. Stereotypical and prejudicial portrayals based on visual and verbal media frames of race, ethnicity, and nationality are harmful not only to the individuals who identify with the offended race, ethnicity or nationality, but also harmful to the culture being perpetuated by such ideology. Given the pervasive role of the media, it is imperative for Sport Management scholars to assess the manner and extent to which racism is embedded in the texts and images depicted in print and electronic sport media. Although the examinations of the dynamics of race and ethnicity in sport media are increasing and gaining attention (e.g., Armstrong, 1999; 2000; Hardin et al., 2004; Sabo, Jansen, Tate, Duncan, & Leggett, 1995), the collective body of work on the systematic examination of how the media presents and portrays race and ethnicity is still somewhat limited (Hardin et al., 2004), thereby inviting continuing exploration.

In addition to the measures previously discussed to ‘validate’ research on race and ethnicity, Hartman (1999) indicated that the proper unit of analysis and critique of the racial and ethnic phenomenon is from the backdrop and perspective of race relations. He contended that: (a) these phenomena are best understood, challenged and changed at the systemic and relational levels, and (b) the systematic and relational levels are the best positions from which to contextualize the conditions and relationships that create, perpetuate, sustain, and reinforce prejudicial racial and ethnic attitudes and racially and ethnically discriminatory practices and behaviors. Based on Omi and Winant’s (1994) emphasis on the social struggle and exercise of power as processes whereby racial structures are produced, reproduced, and transformed, Hartman surmised that “racial structures are not absolutely determined and determining. Instead, these structures are produced and reproduced by human agents, who constantly struggle against these constraints and against one another (with different interest and degrees of power and capital)” (p. 28).

Hardin et al. (2004) indicated that U.S. sport represents the landscape described by Hartman (1999), in that “sport is actually a contested racial terrain, a place for struggles against sport’s reflection of White male hegemony in the larger culture” (p. 213). Lipsitz (2009) opined:

Whiteness is everywhere in American culture, but it is hard to see. . . . White power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular. As the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, Whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations (p. 146).

Thus, there is a need for research on race and ethnicity in Sport Management from the perspective of and through lenses that embrace a consciousness, a ‘presence of mind,’ and precise awareness of the existence and consequences of race relations and elements of Whiteness (Lipsitz, 2009).

Race and Ethnicity: Trends and Patterns in the Sport Management Industry and Academe

Sport organizations have generally failed to nurture a racially and ethnically diverse workforce (Crawly 1999; Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2001). Moreover, there is a dearth of available research on race and ethnicity concerning the management of sport. Most sport organizations either do not capture or release the racial and ethnic profiles of their consumers or employees, nor do they have an abundance of race or ethnicity based information in their databases or management/marketing information systems. However, the data available (Lapchick, 2009) indicate that People of Color do not have a prominent role in controlling the management structures of sport. Although the stakeholders served by the collegiate sport enterprise comprise a racially and ethnically diverse mix, the predominant culture of the management/administration thereof is one that tends to value similarity (Fink et al., 2001). Such may also be inferred of professional sports (based on Lapchick’s 2009 Racial and Gender Report Card) which reflects very limited racial and ethnic diversity among its leaders.

Consequently, an element of systemic Whiteness or as what Healey (2009) would describe as an ‘Anglocentric flavor’ is the culture that permeates the Sport Management Industry. The Anglocentric permeations in Sport Management, and the ‘racialized’ and ‘ethnicized’ social system of sport create personal spaces and networks therein that are often detrimental to the opportunities and experiences for People of Color. The predominance of Whiteness as a racial identity in Sport Management is such that: (a) elements of race are often void to Whites, whereas, (b) the subsequent effects of White privilege are often inescapable by People of Color (Arai & Kivel, 2009). Blauner (2009) also subscribed to this premise and stated that different worldviews and implicit systems of understandings of the social realities of race and ethnicity exist between European Americans and Americans of Color. Whereas, these phenomena are more likely to be central to People of Color, they are often viewed on the periphery by European Americans, who often view matters of race and ethnicity as an aberration.

Despite the challenges and discrepant perspectives for adequately measuring, analyzing, and contextualizing the effects of race and ethnicity, scholars (Mueller & Gurin, 1962) have long had an interest in investigating
differences in the sport/leisure trends, patterns and behaviors of individuals who are/were defined by racial and socioeconomic characteristics (Stodalska & Walker, 2007). While research on race and ethnicity in leisure (in general) has grown in ‘waves’ (Floyd, 2007), research on race and ethnicity in Sport Management in particular has comparably appeared in ‘ripples’. Consequently, the explorations of race and ethnicity in Sport Management have not been as extensive as those in related disciplines of leisure and business (Thomas & Dyall, 1999). Since there are fewer Scholars of Color in Sport Management in comparison with the number of Anglo scholars, based on the perspectives of Blauner (2009) and Arari and Kivel (2009), it stands to reason that elements of race and ethnicity have not had a more prominent place in Sport Management scholarship.

Nevertheless, just as the foci of race and ethnicity in general has tended to center on direct or indirect examinations of discrimination and prejudice faced by racial and ethnic minority group members (Sasidharan, 2002), so has the predominant research related to Sport Management (be it in sport or nonsport publications). As such, Sport Management research has tended to ‘ride’ the first wave discussed by Floyd (2007) characterized by a focus on antecedents and/or consequence of racial and ethnic prejudice or discrimination. Such research has offered insight into and/or demonstrated how race and ethnicity have been both implied and expressed, and overtly and covertly operationalized to influence: (a) the inequality of sport employment opportunities of People of Color (Cunningham, Bruening, & Straub, 2006; Evans, 2001; Lapchick, 2009; McDowell, Cunningham, & Singer, 2009; Quarterman, 1992); (b) the racio-social struggles and experiences of student-athletes of Color, notably Black males (Martin, Harrison, Stone, & Lawrence, 2010; May & Reuben, 2009; Singer, 2008; 2009) and to a lesser extent Black females (Bruening, Armstrong, & Pastore, 2005); (c) the notion of stacking, or the race-based ‘filtering’ of athletes of Color into certain roles and positions based on preconceived race-based stereotypes (Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Sack, Singh, & Thiel, 2005); and (d) the challenges of race and gender as a ‘double-edged sword’ that influences the sport leadership opportunities for women of Color (Armstrong, 2006; Armstrong & Bryant, 2007). Research related to sport management has also addressed the effects of race and ethnicity on sport consumption (Armstrong & Stratta, 2004; Bilyeu and Wann, 2002; Clark & Mannon, 2006; McCarthy & Stillman, 1998; Pons, Laruche, Nyeck, & Perreault, 2001; Sapolsky, 1980; Schurr, Wittig, Ruble, & Ellen, 1988; Zhang, Pease, Hui, & Michaud, 1995, to name a few).

A Special Issue: ‘Lifting the Veils and Illuminating the Shadows’

As addressed previously, the coupling of the lack of a formidable infusion of racial and ethnic diversity in the Sport Industry (Lapchick, 2009) and the Sport Management

Academic, where Faculty of Color often experience social isolation, disengagement, and scholarship biases (Burden, Harrison, & Hodges, 2005), has contributed to the establishment, perpetuation, substantiation, and dominance of the racial order that pervades the institution of sport, and the knowledge produced from the inquiry thereof. These conditions contribute to the trends, challenges, and thus, the status of scholarship adequately discerning how race and ethnicity influence and impact the management of sport.

Aside from the insight gleaned from the available research from sport scholars and scholars from various peripheral disciplines on race and ethnicity related to sport management, there is still a need for Sport Management scholars to continue to increase their understanding of the implications of managing sport participation, sport consumption, sport media, sport marketing, and sport employment of individuals whose lives are ‘decorated’ by elements of race and ethnicity. Based on the: (a) methodological challenges of researching race and ethnicity, (b) the prominence of an ‘Anglocentric flavor’ in Sport Management scholarship, and (c) the emergence, depth, and breadth of Sport Management inquiry, issues regarding race and ethnicity are still largely ‘veiled in the shadows’. The scarcity of research on the impact of race and ethnicity on the management of sport was the primary impetus for this Special Issue on Race and Ethnicity.1

‘Assorted Flavors’: Paradigmatic and Methodological Plurality

The authors featured in this Special Issue offer an ‘assorted flavored’ scholarship that helps to lift the veil and illuminate the corners of the shadows in Sport Management that are ornamented by race and ethnicity. As such, they offer a ‘kaleidoscopic’ view of the issues under exploration. The scholarship featured in this Special Issue evidences Floyd’s (2007) first wave of leisure research, with a focus on how discrimination influences the sport management experiences of People of Color. The scholarship also reflects elements of Floyd’s (2007) third wave of leisure research as characterized by the: (a) diversity and multietnic comparisons of the populations under study, and (b) the intersection of theoretical and methodological positions and treatments of race and ethnicity with other topical areas (such as broader dimensions of culture, social practices and relations, gender, etc.). What Arari and Kivel (2009) termed the ‘fourth wave’ of leisure research on race and ethnicity is also evident in the scholarship in this Special Issue based on the: (a) emphasis on reexamining race and racism rather than just cultural differences; (b) contextualizations of race and racism within theoretical frameworks which enable a broader discussion of social and structural inequalities, power, ideology, and White hegemony; and (c) use of diverse methodologies for examining the impact of race and racism. Moreover, a diverse ensemble of participants served as the foci of inquiry in this Special Issue.
In distinct and unique ways, the scholarship featured in this Special Issue highlights the impact of race and ethnicity on the collegiate and elite athlete experiences, sport team personnel management decisions, sport marketing success, sport media practices and portrayals, and sport leadership opportunities. The featured scholarship addresses the: (a) sociohistorical implications of race relations on contemporary sport management, in Smith and Hattery’s critical essay, Race Relations Theories: Implications for Sport Management, (b) the impact of White privilege, new racism, and the intersections of such on African American female student-athletes (in Gill’s article, The Rutgers Women’s Basketball & Don Imus [RUIMUS] Controversy: White Privilege, New Racism, and Sport Management Implications); (c) role of race and ethnicity (via the presence of social support networks) on the experiences of elite Indigenous Aboriginal athletes (in Nicholson, Hoye, and Gallant’s article, The Provision of Social Support for Elite Indigenous Athletes in Australian Football); (d) salience of the ethnicity match between an athlete endorser and the audience member on sport advertising effectiveness (for Anglo American and Asian American students) in Kim and Cheong’s article, The Effects of Athlete-Endorsed Advertising: The Moderating Role of the Athlete-Audience Ethnicity Match); (e) the presence of racial ideology in the framing and portrayal of Asian, African American, and Hispanic professional Major League Baseball players in two popular sport magazines (in Eagleman’s article, Stereotypes of Race and Nationality: A Qualitative Analysis of Sport Magazine Coverage of Major League Baseball Players); and (f) the impact of the congruence between a metropolitan’s racial demography and the racial composition of its professional team(s) on overall attendance, and thus on team revenue (in Nadeau, Pegoraro, Jones, O’Reilly, and Carvalho’s article, Racial-Ethnic and Team-Market Congruence in Professional Sport).

Race and ethnicity do not exist in isolation and thus, our epistemological approaches may enhance learning and our ways of knowing when they represent the intersections of race and ethnicity with other social, cultural, psychological, and organizational renderings. In this Special Issue the impact of race and ethnicity is articulated under the auspices of various theoretical frameworks and conceptual underpinnings: (a) Race Relations Theory, (b) Critical Race Theory—most notably the tenets of White Privilege, New Racism, Symbolic Racism, and inferences of Black Feminist Thought, (c) Social Networking Theory; (e) Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Self Awareness; (f) Framing Theory, and (g) Congruence Theory. In so doing, the authors employed both race-based and non-raced based epistemologies to enlarge our understanding of how race and ethnicity may influence Sport Management. As Lipsitz (2009) requested, they also offered a collective lens, consciousness, ‘presence of mind,’ and precise awareness of the existence and consequences of Whiteness to the sport management experiences and behaviors of People of Color.

Hartmann’s (1999) contentions about the systemic undercurrents of race and ethnicity and the means by which they are operative, beckon a critical examination of the broader systems of race relations in Sport Management. In a manner reflecting/revisiting the ‘First Wave’ of leisure research on race and ethnicity discussed by Floyd (2007), Smith and Hattery’s critical essay in this Special Issue headed to Hartmann’s call and offered a sociohistorical perspective as to how and why race and ethnicity influences sport management. They provide a brief introduction to race relations theory and the race relations cycle and symbolic racism, along with sociological concepts of social distance theory, segregation, and power as lenses through which to examine how race relations, and more specifically the dominance of a White power structure, may perpetuate racializing of sport as a site of contested terrain that inhibits racio-ethnic minorities from obtaining equal access and opportunities for sport management positions.

The scholarship featured in this Special Issue reflects the array of conceptualizations of race and ethnicity as discussed by Cornell and Hartman (2004), Davis (1992), Hartman (1999), and Higginbotham and Andersen (2009): (a) race as a categorical descriptive variable, as examined in the media analysis in Eagleman’s (2011) article and as reflected in the market demography in Nadeau et al.’s (2011) article; (b) race as ethnicity and ethnicity as race (termed racio-ethnic) by Nadeau et al.; (c) race as empirically collateral to ethnicity, as posited in Kim and Cheong (2011); (d) race and ethnicity as elements of culture and as expressed as social support, as in Nicholson et al. (2011); (e) race as an institutionalized embodiment as discussed by Smith and Hattery (2011); and (f) racialized gender, i.e., the experiences of women of Color that is lived at the intersection of micro and macro elements of race relations and power dynamics as illustrated by Gill (2011). As supported by the premises of Hitlin et al., (2007) and Davis (1992), the authors of the scholarship in this Special Issue did not analytically separate or statistically break apart race and ethnicity, giving credence to the claim that the lived experiences of People of Color in sport may be illuminated without making this distinction.

The scholarship in this Special Issue also addresses the methodological challenges and research imperatives previously discussed by Loue (1999), Hartman (1999), Scraton (2001) and Kellner (2003) regarding: (a) the measures (descriptions and explanations) that should be taken to ‘validate’ research on race and ethnicity, and (b) the contents that should be explored to advance our understanding of the impact of race and ethnicity (such as media critiques, the intersection of race and ethnicity with gender, and the acknowledgment of the systemic Whiteness in the institution of sport). Race and ethnicity are lived and expressed differently from different social locations. In accordance with such differences, a myriad of methods and procedures are employed in this Special Issue to reveal the impact of race and ethnicity on human and organizational behaviors including: (a) qualitative
methods such as participant observations, document analysis, face recognition analysis, participant interviews, and critical case study analysis; (b) quantitative methods such as cross-sectional surveys and experimental stimuli; (c) analysis of primary data; (d) analysis of secondary data; and (e) race and ethnicity as determined both by participant’s self-identification as well as by researcher ascriptions based on visual coding.

Notwithstanding the ‘troublesome’ nature of ‘capturing’ race and ethnicity, we witness the impact of race and ethnicity as explanatory independent and dependent variables, as demonstrated in quantitative analyses—in Nadeau et al. (2011) and in Kim and Cheong (2011), and also as evidenced as critical qualitative phenomenon still seeking explanation, as revealed by Gill’s (2011) critique, by Eagleman’s (2011) analysis, and in Nicholson et al.’s (2011) contribution. Frisby (2005) stated:

...If we are to fully understand all dimensions of sport management, we need research to be conducted from multiple paradigms. The paradigms we operate from as researchers, whether it is positivism, pragmatism, interpretivism, critical social science, post modernism, or a combination of these paradigms, shape the questions we ask, the methods we use, and the degree to which our findings will have an impact on society (p. 2).

Through the scholarship featured in this Special Issue, we see the benefits of ‘paradigmatic and methodological plurality’ as encouraged by Frisby (2005). We are treated to poignant illustrations of how and why race and ethnicity (in their varied conceptual and methodological articulations and manifestations) impact Sport Management at the macro and micro levels. In so doing, we can appreciate the contributions of paradigmatic and methodological plurality in ‘expanding the horizons’ (Amis & Silk, 2005) of Sport Management knowledge and inquiry.

Race and Ethnicity in Sport Management: ‘Contours, Meanings, and Matters’

Through the scholarship featured in this Special Issue, we glean some valuable insight that offers plausible responses to a fundamental question posed by Floyd (1998): Why is race and ethnicity relevant to leisure choices and constraints? To answer this question as applied to sport and Sport Management, I will elucidate the highlights of the featured scholarship. To begin, Smith and Hattery’s (2011) critical essay reminds us of the need to continually situate the impact of race and ethnicity in the proper sociohistorical context of the prevailing race relations (and thus, the racialized social relations and power relations that create and sustain them) to better understand their influences on the sport management experiences of, and opportunities for, People of Color.

Research suggests that racial identity can be manifested on various levels. Valk and Karu (2001) indicated that ethnic identity may be “one of the most salient and emotionally charged social identifications” (p. 583). Nicholson et al.’s (2011) article on Indigenous Aboriginal athletes in this Special Issue supports this notion and demonstrates the salience of racial and ethnic identity as embedded in the social and cultural support athletes seek to have meaningful and fulfilling sport experiences. Nicholson et al. also highlights the value of the social and cultural capital of family and the collective social networks (Schaefer, 2009) to Indigenous athletes. They demonstrate how race and racism may contribute to feelings of social isolation and cultural discomfort (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002) in a manner that influenced the athletes’ enjoyment and satisfaction with participating in the Australian Football League. Lastly, Nicholson et al.’s article also illustrates the role of community relationships via sport as a ‘social lubricant for social capital production’ (Glover, Parry, & Shinew, 2005).

Closely related to the construct of racial and ethnic identification is racial and ethnic representation. “...People of Color are psychologically and materially adversely affected when repeatedly confronted with demeaning and stereotypical racial representations” (McDonald 2009, p. 6). Racial representation (via racial and ethnic congruence theory) provided the framework by which the participants in Kim and Cheong’s (2011) article responded to athlete endorsed advertisements such that the ethnicity match enhanced advertising effectiveness. The salience of racial congruence is also demonstrated in Nadeau et al.’s (2011) article whereby the racial congruency between Major League Baseball teams and their respective markets influenced team revenue. Nadeau et al., situate their findings in the sociohistorical context of the unique role of race and ethnicity to baseball. It is interesting to note that there has been precedence for sport teams to want the racial profile of their sport teams to be less ‘ethnic’ to appeal to sponsors. For instance, Duru (2010) reported that certain teams would not field a majority Black team even if they were successful based on the perceptions fans in their community. As the owner of one professional team stated, “Half the team should be White. I think people are afraid to speak out on that subject. White people need to have White heroes. I’ll be truthful, I respect them [Blacks], but I need White people. It’s in me” (Duru, p. 634–635). Nadeau et al.’s article in this Special Issue suggests a rethinking of this position.

Through the scholarship in this Special Issue we are also reminded of how the dynamics and discursive sport media creates, maintains, and expresses elements of race and ethnicity. For instance, as Eagleman’s (2011) article demonstrates, systemic racism ‘distorts’ the messages embedded in the media frames and advertising portrayals of Asian, African American, and Latino MLB players. What’s more, racially and ethnically discriminating ideologies were undercurrents in the media logic that frames the presentation of minority athletes in two of the most popular sport print media publications, ESPN The Magazine and Sports Illustrated. Todorov (2000) declared that racism in general and racialized gender is both a matter of behavior and a matter of ideology. Both
were explored in Gill’s (2011) media critique as they were demonstrated in the conversation that ensued between Don Imus and his associate about Rutgers University Black female basketball players, and it was also evident in the ideological nature of the comments/verbal behaviors that defined the conversation. As Gill illuminated, racism and racialized gender ideology provided the underpinning of what hue (race) and what culture (racio-ethnic embodiment) ‘beauty’ in female athletes is best packaged.

The contributions of Gill’s (2011) and Eagleman’s (2011) scholarship demonstrate the dangers of the overt and inferential racism espoused in the racial and ethnic ideology conveyed in print and electronic sport media. These articles reveal the powerful role of the media in shaping, perpetuating, and reinforcing racial ideology. They also highlight the need for responsible sport media representation of race and ethnicity, and give voice to what Sabo et al. (1995) considered ‘socially structured silence’ which otherwise maintains a status quo of racial and ethnic inequality and injustice.

Floyd (2007) insisted that scholars have a responsibility ‘to translate race and ethnicity theory and research into language for consumption and application’ (p. 250). He added,

...researchers have an obligation to help practitioners see and understand racial and ethnic implications of their work...failing to engage practitioners through our work can foreclose opportunities to positively and significantly impact communities that are underserved, disenfranchised, and oppressed (p. 250).

Through the applications, implications, and suggestions presented, the scholarship in this Special Issue offers practical and theoretical insight that contributes to the creation of “managerially relevant knowledge and practical understandings that enable change and provide skills for new ways of operation” (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 21) as noted by Frisby (2005).

Of course this limited collection of articles cannot provide answers to all of the critical questions regarding race and ethnicity in Sport Management that deserve further exploration. For instance, Carrington and McDonald (2001, p. 8) posed the following questions: (a) How do the types of practices, representations and discourses that sport produces in terms of its physically competitive, symbolic and public displays of meritocratic competition, help to sustain (and challenge) our understanding of ‘race’ and racism in social relations outside of sport? and (b) What part might sport play in beginning to dismantle the widespread acceptance of racial categories and hierarchies? Scraton (2001) also presented some critical questions that summon answers from Sport Management scholars: (a) To what extent and in what ways do social representations construct Women of Color as a racialized category and how do these stereotypes serve to structure their position in sport? (b) What are the processes whereby sport becomes racially gendered? (c) How do women position themselves with respect to such discourses? and (d) What light do women’s personal accounts throw on the way in which discursive significance are implicated in their person and social identities?” (p. 177).

Inquiring about race and ethnicity requires us to embrace a ‘journey of discovery’ that is as much about the ‘traveling’ as it is about reaching the ‘destination.’ In spite of the rudiments and far-reaching implications of race and ethnicity that are still in the veils of unchartered territory, the scholarship featured in this Special Issue furthers the explorations of race and ethnicity in Sport Management. It takes us on a noteworthy voyage in that it: (a) demonstrates how race and ethnicity contour the social relations, discursive fields, and power dynamics that shape the experiences of People of Color in the institution of sport; (b) verifies the ways in which race and ethnicity define and make salient the meanings of the lived experiences and practices that affect sport participants, spectators, and employees of Color; and thus, (c) confirms that race and ethnicity are part of the resolve that determines what matters to the consciousness and to the internalization of the sport evaluations and experiences of People of Color, that are also matters for sport business success. Such insights (contours, meanings, and matters) are possible when scholars espy a deeper panoramic view of sport, from a shifted perspective and tilted consciousness that lifts the ‘veil’ of the realities of race and ethnicity for People of Color that heretofore have been concealed and/or obscured in the shadows of the Sport Management Academe. As expressed in this lengthy (and perhaps somewhat scenic) discussion, and as a response to Floyd’s (1998) fundamental question, this Special Issue demonstrates that race and ethnicity are most relevant to sport/leisure choices and constraints?

Conclusion

Anyone who thinks that race does not matter much might want to step into the shoes of those who know it does (Higginbotham & Andersen, 2009, p. 9).

Race and ethnicity have taken precedence such that circumstances alone seem incapable of explaining the power and persistence of race and ethnicity and how they “have retained their apparent privilege and power as bases of identity, social organization, and collective action and as the grounds on which many groups, in effect, choose to interpret and pursue their interests” (Cornell & Hartman, 2004, p. 27). McDonald (2009) stated, “race often serves as fodder for fantasy, pleasure, and also discontent.” The essence of her statement is illustrated in this Special Issue which acknowledges the meanings, power, and consequences of race and ethnicity in varied contexts within Sport Management. Notwithstanding the variation in the conceptual and methodological approaches undertaken in the scholarship in this Special Issue, both the functions and malfunctions (Sowell, 1983) of race and ethnicity are prominent.

Research abounds attesting to the effects of race and ethnicity which may be reflected or manifested in skin color, culture, ideology, external treatment, self identity,
and others (Hilton, et al., 2007). According to Schaefer (2009), “Race is a social construction, and this process benefits the oppressor, who defines who is privileged and who is not…allows racial hierarchies to emerge to the benefit of the dominant ‘races’ (p. 16). Based on the (racial and ethnic) dynamics that pervade sport - where a matrix of dominance defined by Whiteness permeates - there is a need for continual exploration and interrogation of the systemic elements in the organizational and commercial ‘terrains’ of Sport Management that: (a) ‘paint’ (and often stain) the experiences of People of Color with a racialized and ethnicized reality, (b) largely define the collective actions and personal practices that bound the ‘fields of play’ for the mosaic of individuals therein, and (c) may be contested to promote racial and ethnic harmony, equality, and positive reflections and self-presentations in every facet of sport management (including athletic participation, sport spectating, sport media consumption, and sport administration).

Sammons (1994) declared that race is one of the most hotly debated topics among scholars and should be discussed “openly, directly, and cautiously…” (p. 205). Coakley (2007) opined that “... sports can... be sites for challenging racial ideology and transforming ethnic relations” (p. 319). Higginbotham and Andersen (2009) professed, “…we can learn to challenge these ways of interacting by becoming more aware of the reality of race in everyday life and working to change it in our personal lives, as well as within larger societal structures” (p. 10).

It is my hope, based on Higginbotham and Anderson’s (2009) assertion, that the scholarship featured in this Special Issue encourages Sport Management scholars at the personal and professional levels to be more willing to address race and ethnicity openly, directly, and cautiously such that we may become more cognizant of the manner in which a deeper understanding of race and ethnicity may: (a) compass our understanding of the nuances of managing sport and thus, (b) navigate our epistemological and pedagogical approaches to inform our Academe, empower our students, and inspire our athletes, fans, and community partners toward racial and ethnic inclusivity, racial and ethnic sensitivity, and racial and ethnic justice. Herein lie the underlying purposes and the anticipated significance of this Special Issue.

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References


