

Racial-Ethnic Minorities and Sport

Chapter 13
Eitzen & Sage (2003)
Coakley (2007)

KIN 101
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Racial/Ethnic Minorities - Overview

- ✦ Still face persistent and ongoing discrimination in the USA
- ✦ Sport often seen to demonstrate the fact that as a society we are free from these problems
- ✦ For Example: Proportion of African Americans in sport (relative to the general population) must be a sign of a color-blind society...right?
- ✦ BUT – Sport as a microcosm of society show that racial and ethnic discrimination are still prevalent

Defining Terms:

- ✦ Race is often seen as distinct category because members share genetic traits but...
- ✦ Races are *socially constructed* categories
- ✦ Arbitrary placement of people into groupings based on physical attributes (that are ultimately minor genetically speaking)

Defining Terms:

- ↘ Categories are not fixed but are fluid and change between country and culture and historical time periods
- ↘ “One drop” rule was used to categorize races in southern states
- ↘ The Tiger Factor: How is Tiger Woods classified?

“Race” in the United States

- ↘ “Race” is a primitive but powerful classification system that has been used around the world
- ↘ “Race” is based on a two-category classification system premised on the rule of hypo-descent or the “one-drop rule”
- ↘ The “one-drop rule” was developed by white men to insure the “purity” of the “white race” and property control by white men
- ↘ Mixed-race people challenge the validity of this socially influential way of defining race

Racial Ideology in History

Racial classification systems were developed as white Europeans explored and colonized the globe and found that there were physical differences between people

- ↘ These systems were used to justify colonization, conversion, and even slavery and genocide
- ↘ According to these systems, white skin was the standard, and dark skin was associated with intellectual inferiority and slowed development

Defining Terms:

- Tiger Woods: Confounds Categorization
- By the "one drop" rule he would be considered "black" - Yet...
- 1/4 African American
- 1/4 Thai
- 1/4 Chinese
- 1/8 Native American
- 1/8 White European
- In Brazil he would be considered "white"
- In the U.S. public media he is often considered "black"



Defining Terms:

- Ethnicity: Refers to cultural heritage of a group rather than perceived biological similarities.
- "An ethnic group is a category of people who share a common cultural (language or dialect, religion, customs, and history) Examples of ethnic groups in the U.S. are Arab Americans, Greek Americans, Irish Americans, and Mexican Americans" (p. 286)

Defining Terms:

- Racial-Ethnic Group: Refers to groups that are socially subordinated and culturally distinct in society. For example-
- Latino, Asian American, African American, and Native American have been constructed as *both racially and culturally distinct*

Hierarchies of Power

- ↘ So how come different racial and ethnic groups seem to share unequally in power, resources, and prestige?
- ↘ Why are some groups dominate and other groups subordinate?

Hierarchies of Power

- ↘ Power! (who has it and how do they wield it)
 - From technology, weapons, property, or economic resources
- ↘ Majority v. Minority groups
- ↘ Majority Group: Hold power in society and set up system of inequality to reinforce domination

Hierarchies of Power

- ↘ Minority Group:
 - Any distinct group in society that shares group characteristics
 - Forced to occupy low status in society due to discrimination
 - Can be based on characteristics: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability
- ↘ BUT Not always *numeric superiority* but power imbalance (think gender here)
 - Less power = less status as compared to other groups in society

How does it relate to sport:

- Minority issues in sport often have *structural foundations* (that is: *institutionalized inequality*) –
- Challenges the idea that we have worked through issues of discrimination and systemic inequality simply because a relatively small percentage of minorities (relative to the total population of the USA) are high-profile well paid athletes

For example (p. 286):

- Unemployment rate for black, Latino, & native Americans is roughly 2x that of whites
- Median family income for black families is 60% of median income for white families (slightly better for Latinos but worse for Native Americans)
- Median income in 2000 for full-time workers age 25 and older with a college degree: 60K for white men; 45.4K for black men; 45.5k for Latino men
For Women: 42.3K for white women; 37.6K for black women; 36.2 for Latinas
- Home ownership rates for African Americans and Latinos is 2/3 the rate for whites

Social Institutions

- Most often not the “fault” of minorities but social institutions can perpetuate inequalities:
- Schools financed by local taxes
- Class-based testing to “track” students
- Lending practices by financial institutions
- “Racial profiling” by law enforcement
- “Old boys” networks for hiring and promotions (think NCAA and NFL here)

Race Logic in Sport

- Race logic encourages people to “See” sport performances in racialized terms, i.e., in terms of skin color
- Use *whiteness* as the taken-for-granted standard
- Explain the success or failure of people of color in racial terms
- Do studies to “discover” racial difference
- Internalized racism – “live up” to the less than empowering expectations of mainstream society

Race Logic in Sport (cont)

- Black male students often have a difficult time shaking “athlete” labels based on *race logic*
- Young people from all racial backgrounds may make sport choices influenced by race logic
- In everyday life, race logic is related to the cultural logic of gender and social class

Race Logic

- “Achievements” of White Athletes are due to:
 - Character (hard-worker/leader)
 - Culture
 - Organization
 - “Achievements” of Minority Athletes are due to:
 - Biology
 - Natural physical abilities
 - Leads to a common sporting practice known as “stacking”
 - Minority group members are disproportionately found in specific team positions and underrepresented in others
- Football provides many examples (but is it changing?)
Quarterbacks
Head coaches

Sport Participation among Latinos & Hispanics

- ↪ The experiences of Latino and Latina athletes have been ignored until recently
- ↪ Stereotypes about physical abilities have influenced perceptions of Latino athletes
- ↪ Latinos now make up over 25% of Major League Baseball players
- ↪ Latinos often confront discrimination in school sports
- ↪ Latinas have been overlooked due to faulty generalizations about gender and culture

Sport Participation among Asian Americans

- ↪ The cultural heritage and histories of Asian Americans are very diverse
- ↪ The sport participation patterns of Asian Americans vary with their immigration histories
- ↪ Little is known about how the images of Asian American athletes are represented in the media and minds of people in the US

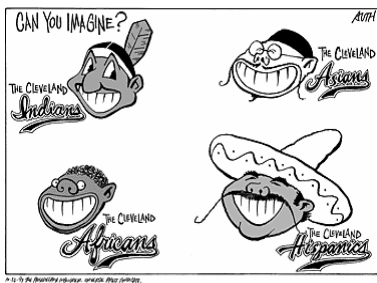
Sport Participation among Native Americans

- ↪ Native Americans comprise dozens of diverse cultural groups
- ↪ Traditional Native American sports combine physical activities with ritual and ceremony
- ↪ Native Americans often fear losing their culture when they play Euro-American sports
- ↪ Stereotypes used in sports discourage Native American participation

Images of Native Americans in Sports

Using *stereotypes* of Native Americans as a basis for team names, logos, and mascots is a form of bigotry, regardless of the intentions of those who do it

- Are there conditions under which a group or organizations could use the cultural and religious images of others for their own purposes?
- What would happen if a school named their teams the Olympians and used the Olympic logo (5-Rings) as their logo?



Why have other ethnic stereotypes been rejected in U.S. sports?

The Dynamics of Racial & Ethnic Relations in Sports

- Race and ethnicity remain significant in sports today
- Today's challenges are not the ones faced in the past
- It is a mistake to think that racial and ethnic issues disappear when desegregation occurs
- The challenge of dealing with inter-group relations never disappears – it changes in terms of the issues that must be confronted

Eliminating Racial & Ethnic Exclusion in Sports (I)

Changes are most likely when

1. People with power and control benefit from inclusion
2. Individual performances can be measured precisely and objectively
3. Members of an entire team benefit from the achievements of teammates

(continued)

Eliminating Racial & Ethnic Exclusion in Sports (II)

Changes are most likely when

4. Superior performances do not lead to automatic promotions on teams
5. Team success does not depend on off-the-field socializing and friendships
6. Athletes have little power or authority in the organizational structure of a sport organization or team

After Inclusion:

Managing Racial & Ethnic Diversity

Racial and Ethnic Diversity creates management challenges related to

- The social dynamics on teams
- The social dynamics among spectators
- The marketing of athletes, teams, and leagues

NOTE: The global recruitment of players insures that diversity issues will always exist in sports

The Biggest Challenge: *Integrating Positions of Power*

- ↘ Even when sport participation is racially and ethnically mixed, power in sports is not readily shared
- ↘ The movement of minorities into coaching and administrative positions has been very slow
- ↘ Social and legal pressures are still needed before power is fully shared
