As I walk down the hall toward my classroom, a feeling of anticipation always rushes through my veins. The demographic composition in this classroom is unique in that the majority of the class is African American males. The African American students always sit to on the right side of the class, the Caucasian male students sit on the left, and the two female students are always sitting in the front row. I really enjoy a pedagogical approach which relies heavily on discussion, encouraging students to share ideas and opinions; however, in this class, the conversation appears to be dominated by the African American students. Over the span of the semester I have observed that whenever the African American students speak, some of the Caucasian students gaze at me as if they are annoyed. As a matter of fact some will even roll their eyes. Moreover, observation revealed one student; a Caucasian male expressed to me his views on the inordinate number of African American students in the class. “The Black kids are so loud, and all they do is talk all the time,” he explained, “I feel the Black kids disrupt the class as well as my learning.” I am a 26-year-old Caucasian female instructor, putting me in the minority race and gender. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of students in a racially diverse male dominated sport management classroom.

This study utilizes the phenomenological case study approach, a methodology which allows for a greater understanding of a particular real life situation from the prospective and overall knowledge of a particular subgroup (Henry et al., 2008; Lingren & Kohoe, 1981; Vaughn et al., 1986). Consequently, a greater understanding and clarification of information by those involved in such situations is realized (Denscombe, 2004). Observation is the primary method of investigation as this particular technique relies on the knowledge and judgment of the researcher, and observation is considered to be the “fundamental base of all research methods” (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 105). Therefore, as an active participant involved in the setting, I am acting in the complete membership role throughout my observations (Adler & Adler, 1998). Utilizing the complete membership role allows me to naturally interact in the research environment without altering the research setting (Adler & Adler, 1998).

Along with observation, document analysis will to used to validate this study. According to Creswell (2009), “journaling is a popular data collection process in case studies and narrative research” (p. 131). Therefore, upon receiving IRB approval, students in this class were asked to voluntarily journal weekly (outside of class) about their classroom experience. Students were asked to journal a minimum of four times from October (when this study received IRB approval) to the end of the fall semester. However, to ensure the student’s grades are in no way impacted by their willingness to participate in this study or the comments that they made in their journals, the researcher will not be able to review the journals until final grades have been submitted. Thus, by examining journal entries, I will be given an insight into what exactly students in this class were experiencing. Journal entries will be examined using open coding to identify the themes that appeared within the data (Creswell, 2007).

This study is informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT), which according to Singer (2005), suggests race is the “most important social construct to consider in the analysis of social, political and educational problems of people in society” (p. 467). With respect to the study, CRT will render race as a unit of analysis, by centering the Whiteness of one of the authors, who is also the instructor of record. One feature of CRT is its embrace of the subjective experiences of people because as Billings (1998) noted, “much of reality is socially constructed” (p.13). Billings also advocates journaling because it provides a forum for each student in the classroom to name his or her “own reality” (p. 13). Another benefit of CRT in relation to this study is that it follows the call of other scholars who seek to challenge the purported neutrality of the American educational system and this study renders race as a category of analysis (Lopez, 2003). What also makes this study palatable to critical race theory is that it continues the trend of couching minority viewpoints in the political conversation (Billings, 1998). By a matter of circumstance, Whiteness is
made visible because of the instructor of record but also in large part due to the Caucasian students who are the minority, literally in the form of their numerical representation but also figuratively because of the “loud” African American students. This study flips the classroom by making the majority the minority and vice versa.

Several practical implications for teaching and classroom management in sport management education exist. First, in light of the fact that there are more minorities than Caucasians in the classroom how can a “balance of power” be achieved? Strategic steps such as responding to an equivalent number of queries from the majority as well as minority students can be undertaken. Moreover, the utilization of contextualized examples that appeal to each racial group can also be implemented. The second concern is how to help Caucasian students successfully assimilate into an environment in which some might be in the minority in the classroom for the first time. The discomfort of Caucasian students around African American students and the negative stereotypes of African Americans held by Caucasian students in the classroom have been well documented (Peterson et al., 1978; Sedlacek, 1999). Learning units on diversity and cultural competency may prove useful in tempering some of the tension in the classroom. Third, utilization of the transformative learning pedagogical method may challenge students to work collectively for their individual and corporate success. Mezirow (1978) and Cranston (1994) argued that students play a vital role as a participating partner in adult learning by bringing forward their experiences and crafting the learning environment. The instructor in this model does not bear the total burden of teaching and learning. Through the deconstruction of meaning schemes (beliefs, attitudes and emotional reactions) and perspectives that are grounded in the totality of individuals’ cultural and contextual experiences, student learners are transformed. Transformation can occur even in the face of what Mezirow (1978) calls a “disorienting dilemma”—an event which alters one’s worldview. Other applicable elements of the transformative learning pedagogical model include self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that others have shared similar transformations, and exploration of new roles or actions (Cranston, 2006) all which will be useful in transforming students and the classroom environment.