The Other Side of the Coin: An Examination of the Impact of Racial Identity on Sport Management Scholarship

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Socio-Cultural - Diversity (Other)  
60-minute symposium, roundtable, or workshop  
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In an age where calls for diversity echo throughout the sporting world, we must embrace the same cry within the academy. Nationwide, nonwhite scholars comprised 36.1% of graduate students in 2008 (NCES, 2008), which is higher than the 22.9% seen in the greater U.S. population (Census 2015). However, minority students may face obstacles that hinder their admission (Gibney, 2014) or experience race based discrimination once enrolled (JBHE, 2016). In order to increase and fully embrace diversity at our institutions, we must find ways to attract minority scholars and create positive environments to retain them. Doing so requires that we better understand the ways in which their experiences and lived identities impact their academic choices.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been used to examine the racialized experiences of graduate students, however, these studies have been through the vantage point of ills suffered by minority students at Predominantly White Institutions (see Hubain, Allen, Harris & Linder, 2016; Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011, and Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009). With the goal of exposing some of the challenges experienced during graduate school, the authors of previous studies have related the experiences of students who are the racial minorities in their respective programs. While exposing the impacts of racism is important to elucidate the experiences of minority scholars, the other parts of the story are worth sharing as well. While university wide minority enrollment is 35.4% (Office of Institutional Equity, 2012), The University of Connecticut graduate sport management program is a unique case in which the current Ph.D. cohort is entirely comprised of minority scholars. Such a rare case deserves exploration as it provides special insights into what attracts and keeps minority students attached to their academic pursuit.

CRT can also be applied to tell the stories that have gone untold, including the ways in which racial identities positively shape the graduate experience. The tenets of CRT, especially counterstorytelling, intersectionality, and commitment to social justice (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015) will inform our exploration into the ways in which racial identity shapes initial interests in Ph.D programs, research endeavors, and the scholarly experience. In this facilitated breakout discussion we will analyze our experiences and invite participants to do the same.