RACE AND ETHNICITY 9

Are they important in sports?

(Source: Dean Purcell/Getty Images)

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TOT UP EVERY Aboriginal first-class (cricket) player in the past 153 years and you're left just shy of a 1st XI, never mind a whole squad.

Christian Ryan, editor of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack Australia*, 2004

THERE'S NOTHING MAGICAL about Indigenous footballers. They are not born with any special powers. Their skills are not bestowed from birth, just waiting to bear fruit on an AFL field 20 years later.

Adam Goodes, Indigenous AFL player, 2010

TUFFEY IS A Māori and traditionally not many Māori make good cricketers … They don't have the patience or the temperament to play through a whole day, let alone over a Test match.

Martin Crowe, sports commentator and former captain of the New Zealand cricket team, 2003

'WHEN YOU REPRESENT Australia you feel like you're probably only representing the east coast, the people who really know and love Rugby League, but when you are representing this Indigenous side it includes everyone from the east coast to the west coast and from the Northern Territory to South Australia. It involves all of those people and it means so much to them so you are playing for them as well.

Scott Prince, NRL player and Indigenous All Star, 2010

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Introduction

Sports involve complex issues related to race and ethnicity. These issues are increasingly relevant as global migration and political changes bring together people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and create new challenges for living, working and playing together. The challenges created by racial and ethnic diversity are among the most important ones that we face in the twenty-first century (Edwards 2000).

Ideas and beliefs about race and ethnicity influence self-perceptions, social relationships and the organisation of social life. Sports reflect this influence and are a site where people challenge or reproduce racial ideologies and existing patterns of racial and ethnic relations in society. As people make sense of sports and give meaning to their experiences as competitors and spectators and the experiences of others, they often take into account skin colour and ethnicity. For example, former Essendon football coach Kevin Sheedy's wish that '[he'd] love to get a six-foot five-inch black guy from Stanford' is an example of this.

Not surprisingly, the social meanings and the experiences associated with skin colour and ethnic background influence access to sports participation, decisions about playing sports and the ways that people integrate sports into their lives. People in some racial and ethnic groups use sports participation to express their cultural identity and evaluate their potential as competitors. In some cases, people are identified and evaluated as competitors because of the meanings given to their skin colour or ethnic background.

Sports are also a cultural site where people formulate or change ideas and beliefs about skin colour and ethnic heritage and then use them as they think about and live other parts of their lives. This means that sports are more than a mere reflection of racial and ethnic relations in society; they are also a site where racial and ethnic relations happen and change. Therefore, it is important to study sports if we want to understand the dynamics of racial and ethnic relations. This chapter will focus on the following topics:

1. definitions of *race* and *ethnicity*, as well as the origins of ideas about race in contemporary cultures

2. racial classification systems and the influence of racial ideology in sports

3. sports participation patterns among racial and ethnic minorities in Australia and New Zealand

4. the dynamics of racial and ethnic relations in sports.

DEFINING *RACE* AND *ETHNICITY*

Discussions about race and ethnicity are confusing when people do not define their terms. In this chapter, **race** refers to *a population of people who are believed to be naturally or biologically distinct from other populations*. When people identify a racial population, they use or infer a classification system that divides all human beings into distinct categories, which are believed to share genetically based physical traits passed from one generation to the next. Therefore, race involves a reference to physical traits, but it is ultimately based on a classification system that people develop around the meanings that they give to particular traits.

Ethnicity is different from race because it refers to *a particular cultural heritage that is used to identify a category of people*. Ethnicity is *not* based on biology or genetically determined traits; instead, it is based on cultural traditions and history. This means that an **ethnic population** is *a category of people regarded as socially distinct because they share a way of life, a collective history and a sense of themselves as a people*.

Lebanese Australians are often referred to as a race because of the special meanings people have given to skin colour in Australia; additionally, they are referred to as an ethnic group because of their shared cultural heritage. This has led many people to use *race* and *ethnicity* interchangeably without acknowledging that one is based on a classification of physical traits and the other on the existence of a shared culture. Many sociologists avoid this confusion because they realise that 'race' has always been based on the social meanings that people have given to physical traits. These meanings, they say, have been so influential in society that shared ways of life have developed around them. Therefore, the focus in sociology today is on ethnicity rather than race, except when sociologists study the social consequences of the ideologies that have been organised around the idea of race.

This information about race is confusing to most people because they have been socialised to take for granted that race is a biological reality. To be told that race is based on social meanings rather than biological facts is difficult to understand. This issue is clarified in the next section.

CREATING RACE AND RACIAL IDEOLOGIES

Human diversity is a fact of life, and people throughout history have always categorised one another, often using physical appearance and cultural characteristics to do so. However, the idea that there are distinct, identifiable races is a recent invention. Europeans developed it during the seventeenth century as they explored the world and encountered people who looked and lived unlike anything they had ever known. As they colonised regions on nearly every continent, Europeans developed classification systems to distinguish the populations that they encountered. They used the term *race* very loosely to refer to people with particular religious beliefs (Hindus), language or ethnic traditions (the Basque people in Spain), histories (Indigenous Peoples such as New World 'Indians' and 'Aborigines'), national origins (Chinese) and social status (chronically poor people, such as gypsies in Europe or the untouchables in India).

Ideas about race emerged in connection with religious beliefs, scientific theories and a combination of political and economic goals (Omi & Winant 1994). However, people have gradually come to use the term *race* to identify populations that they believe are naturally or biologically distinct from other populations. This shift to a biology-based notion of race occurred as light-skinned people from northern Europe sought justification for colonising and exercising power over people of colour around the world. Intellectuals and early scientists facilitated this shift by developing 'objective' racial classification frameworks that enabled them to 'discover' dozens of races, sub-races, collateral races and collateral sub-races—terms they used as they analysed the physical variations of people in colonised territories and other regions of the world.

'Scientific' analyses combined with the observations and anecdotal stories told by explorers led to the development of racial ideologies. As noted in Chapter 1, **racial ideology** consists of *a web of ideas and beliefs that people use to give meaning to specific physical traits such as skin colour and to evaluate people in terms of how they are classified by race*. The racial classification models developed in Europe were based on the assumption that the appearance and actions of white Europeans were normal and that deviations from normal were strange, primitive or immoral. In this way, 'whiteness' became the standard against which the appearance and actions of *others* ('those people') were measured and evaluated.

> **Science has a long and disreputable history of making false extrapolations from inconclusive hard data—extrapolations that merely parrot the prejudices of the age.**
>
> **Gary Kamiya, executive editor,** *Solon***, 2000**

Between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries, whites used this racial ideology to conclude that people of colour around the world were primitive beings driven by brawn rather than brains, instincts rather than moral codes and impulse rather than rationality. This in turn enabled whites to colonise and subsequently exploit, subjugate, enslave and even murder dark-skinned peoples without guilt, or the sense that they had sinned (Hoberman 1992; Smedley 1997, 1999; Tatz 2003; Winant 2001). Racial ideology also led some whites to view people of colour as pagans in need of spiritual salvation. Many church-based missionaries were established across Australia and New Zealand for this reason. They worked to 'civilise' and save souls, and in the process, dark-skinned people came to be known as the 'white man's burden'. Over time, these racial ideologies were widely accepted, and whites used them to connect skin colour with other traits including intelligence, character, physical characteristics and skills.

For example, racial ideology in Australia emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as colonists developed justifications for the occupation of landholdings. By the early nineteenth century, many whites believed that race was a mark of a person's humanity and moral worth. Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, they concluded, were subhuman and incapable of being civilised. By nature, these 'coloured peoples' were socially, intellectually and morally inferior to light-skinned Europeans—a fact that was unchangeable (Smedley 1997). This ideology became popular for three reasons. *First*, as the need for political expansion became important, the (white) citizens and government officials who promoted territorial expansion used racial ideology to justify killing, capturing and confining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to reservations.

Second, white Australians used the 'accepted fact' of racial inferiority to justify laws that restricted the lives of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and enforced racial segregation in many public settings. *Third*, scientists at prestigious universities did research on race and published influential books and articles that claimed to 'prove' the existence of race, the 'natural superiority' of whites and the 'natural inferiority' of non-whites.

The acceptance of this ideology was so pervasive that Australian governments established policies to remove Aboriginals from valued lands. For example, shortly after the establishment of the South Australia colony by an Act of British Parliament, a 'Protector of Aborigines' was appointed. The appointment was to enable the 'protection of the Aborigines in the undisturbed possession of their property rights to such lands as may be occupied in any such manner'. Similar legislation was passed in other colonies and remained as policy and law until late in the twentieth century. These rulings have influenced race relations because they led to many laws, political policies and patterns of racial segregation that connected whiteness with privilege, full citizenship and voting rights, and a combination of social, intellectual and moral superiority over people of colour. As patterns of immigration changed, people came to Australia from Ireland, southern Europe (Italy, Greece, Sicily), China, Japan and Israel. At the same time, dominant racial ideology was used to link whiteness with Australian and British identity. Therefore, the question of who counted as white was often hotly debated as immigrant populations tried to claim Australian identities.

As well, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders were considered throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to be non-white and therefore unqualified for Australian citizenship. Children of mixed Aboriginal ancestry were removed from their families by government agencies. Peter Read, an historian from the Australian National University, estimated that approximately 50 000 children were taken from their families between 1910 and 1970 (ABC 2000). The traditional belief that whiteness is a pure and innately special racial category has, through the twentieth century, created a deep cultural acceptance of racial segregation, inequality and strong political resistance to policies that are designed to deal with the existence and legacy of these facts of Australian life. This is best exemplified by the White Australia Policy that severely restricted immigration to Australia and clearly favoured migrants from Ireland, the UK and Western Europe.

The problem with race and racial ideology

Research since the 1950s has produced increasing evidence that the concept of race is not biologically valid (Omi & Winant 1994). This point has received powerful support from the Human Genome Project, which demonstrates that external traits such as skin colour, hair texture and eye shape are not genetically linked with patterns of internal differences among human beings. We now know that there is more biological diversity within any one human population than there is between any two populations, no matter how different they seem on the surface (AAA 1998; Williams 2005). Noted anthropologist Audrey Smedley (2003) explains that the idea of race has

had a powerful impact on history and society, but it has little to do with real biological diversity among human beings. This is because it is based on categories and classifications that people have developed for social and political reasons. Therefore, race is a myth based on socially created ideas about variations in human potential and abilities that are assumed to be biological.

This conclusion is surprising to most people because they have learned to 'see' race as a fact of life and use it to sort people into what they believe to be biology-based racial categories. They have also used ideas and beliefs about race to make sense of the world and their experiences. This is because racial ideology is so deeply embedded that many people see race as an unchangeable fact of nature that cannot be ignored when it comes to understanding human beings, forming social relationships and organising social worlds. University students frequently encounter bioscience textbooks that perpetrate race as a 'scientific fact' or fail to refute race as a biological myth (Hallinan 1994).

When racial ideology is put aside, we see that definitions of race and approaches to racial classification vary widely across cultures and over time. Thus, a person classified as black in Australia or New Zealand would not be considered to be 'black' in Brazil, Haiti, Egypt or South Africa, where approaches to racial classification are different. For example, Yannick Noah, a pop singer and former professional tennis player, is classified as white in Cameroon because his mother is a light-skinned woman from France, but he is classified as black in his native France because his father is a dark-skinned man from Cameroon in Central West Africa. Brazilians use over one hundred different terms when asked to identify their race. Less than 5 per cent of Brazilians classify themselves as black, even though people in Australia and New Zealand would be likely to say that half of all Brazilians are black according to the way they define race. These cultural and historical variations indicate that race is a social construction instead of an objective, unchanging biological fact.

Another trouble with race is that racial classification models involve making racial distinctions related to *continuous traits* such as skin colour and other physical traits that exist in all people. Height is a good example of a continuous physical trait: everyone has some height, and height varies along a continuum from the shortest person in the world to the tallest. But if we wanted to classify all human beings into particular height categories, we would have to decide where and how many lines we should draw along the height continuum. To do this, we would have to form social agreements about the meanings we wanted to give to various heights. Therefore, in some societies a 185 cm tall man would be classified as tall, whereas 'tall' in other societies might mean 195 cm or more. To make classification matters more complicated, people in particular societies sometimes change their ideas over time about what they consider to be short or tall, as Australians have done through the twentieth century. Additionally, evidence clearly shows that the average height of people in different societies changes over time as diets, lifestyles and height preferences change, even though height is a physical, genetically based trait for individuals (Bilger 2004). This is why the Japanese and northern Europeans now have an average adult height that has surpassed Australians in average adult height.

Skin colour is also a continuous physical trait. It varies from *snow white* at one end of the skin colour continuum to *midnight black* on the other, with an infinite array of colour shades in between. When skin colour is used to identify racial categories, the lines drawn between races are based on the meanings that are given to skin colour by the people who are doing the classifying. Therefore, the identification of races is based on social agreements about where and how many racial dividing lines to draw; it is not based on objective biological division points.

To say that race is a social construction does not deny the existence of physical variations between human populations. This is obvious to all of us. However, when scientists have identified biologically meaningful variations, such as those related to disease or responses to drugs, they do not fit into the skin colour-based racial classification models used in Australia and some other

cultures. Additionally, scientists now realise that physiological traits, including genetic patterns, are also related to the experiences of particular individuals as well as the long-term experiences of particular populations. Even though race is not a valid biological concept, its social significance has profoundly influenced the lives of millions of people for three centuries. This has occurred as people have developed webs of ideas and beliefs around race. In the process, racial ideologies have become deeply embedded in many cultures. These ideologies change over time, but at any point in time they influence people's lives.

The primary trouble with racial ideologies is that their primary purpose over the last three centuries has been to justify the oppression and exploitation of one population by another (Smedley 1997, 1999). Therefore, they have led to and supported racism, or attitudes, actions and policies based on the belief that people in one racial category are inherently superior to people in one or more other categories. In extreme cases, racial ideology has been used to support racist beliefs that people in certain populations are: (1) childlike beings in need of external control, (2) subhuman beings that can be exploited without guilt, (3) forms of property that can be bought and sold or (4) evil beings that should be exterminated through **genocide**, or the *systematic destruction of an identifiable population*.

Another trouble with racial ideologies is that they foster the use of racial **stereotypes**, or *generalisations used to define and judge all individuals in a particular racial category*. Because stereotypes provide ready-made evaluative frameworks for making quick judgments and conclusions about others, they are widely used. They are used most often by people who do not have the opportunity or are not willing to learn about and interact with those who have different race-related experiences. Knowledge undermines racial stereotypes and gradually subverts the ideologies that support them, and the racism that accompanies them.

Race, racial ideology and sports

None of us is born with racial ideology. We acquire it over time as we interact with others and learn to give meanings to physical characteristics such as skin colour, eye shape, the colour and texture of hair or even specific bodily movements. These meanings become the basis for classifying people into racial categories and associating categories with particular psychological and emotional characteristics, intellectual and physical abilities and even patterns of action and lifestyles. This process of making race and racial meanings is built into the cultural fabric of many societies, including Australia and New Zealand. It occurs as we interact with family members, friends, neighbours, peers, teachers and people we meet in our everyday lives. General cultural perspectives as well as images and stories in children's books, textbooks, popular films, television programs, video games, song lyrics and other media content influence it. We incorporate these perspectives, images and stories into our lives to the extent that they fit with our experiences.

The influence of race and racial ideologies in sports has been and continues to be significant in Australia and New Zealand (Bruce & Hallinan 2001; Hippolite 2008a, 2008b; Hippolite & Bruce 2010; Gardiner 1997, 2003; Godwell 2000; Gorman 2005; Hallinan 1991; Hallinan & Judd 2007, 2009a, 2009b; Hokowhitu 2003, 2004a, 2004b; 2005, 2007, 2009; Judd 2008; Judd & Hallinan 2008; McKay 1995; Obel 2004; Rigney 2003; Tatz 1995, 2003). For example, through the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century when Aboriginals and Māori engaged in clearly courageous acts, many whites used racial ideology to conclude that such acts among blacks were based on ignorance and desperation rather than *real* character. Some white people went so far as to say that blacks did not feel pain in the same way whites did, and that this permitted them to engage in superhuman physical feats and endure physical blows, as in the case of boxers (Mead 1985). Many whites concluded that the success of blacks in sports was meaningless because

black competitors were driven by animal instincts instead of heroic and moral character. For example, when legendary boxer Jack Johnson defeated Tommy Burns in Sydney in 1908 for the Heavyweight Championship of the World, journalists and authors wrote stories urging promoters to find a 'great white hope' to defeat the 'subhuman' Johnson on behalf of the 'white race'. Few people today use such blatantly racist language, but traditional ideas about race continue to exist. Therefore, when many Indigenous players line up in the forward and 'crumbing' positions in some AFL matches or when Pacific Islanders come to be over-represented in Rugby Union, many people talk about 'natural abilities', and some scientists want to study bodies wrapped with dark skin to discover what underlying physical traits allow them to perform well—that is, *better than whites*.

On the other hand, when white competitors do extraordinary physical things, dominant racial ideology leads people to conclude that it is either expected or a result of fortitude, intelligence, moral character, strategic preparation, 'coachability' and good organisation. Therefore, few people want to study bodies wrapped in white skin when all the finalists in surfboard riding events are 'white'. When white surfers win nearly all World Cup championships year after year, people do not say that the genetic traits of the white population explain their success. Everyone already knows why the Australians are such good surfers: they live near the coast, they learn to swim at a young age, they grow up in a culture in which the beach and surfing is highly valued and they have many opportunities to surf and swim. In addition, many of their friends surf and talk about surfing and they see Australian men and women winning events and making money in highly publicised World Cup competitions.

'Of course, white folks are good at this. After 500 years of colonising the world by sea, they've been bred to have exceptional sailing genes!' This statement is laughable when made about whites. However, some whites have made similar statements about blacks, and racial ideology has encouraged some scientists to use these statements as a basis for developing research hypotheses. This is one way that culturally based ideas about race influence research questions and distort interpretations of data.

(*Source:* Shutterstock)

Racial ideology focuses attention on *social* and *cultural* factors when the competitors are white. This is why people do not do studies to find genes that give Australian surfboard riders exceptional body control and balance, instinctive eye-hand-foot coordination and the ability to endure cold water. Racial ideology prevents people from seeing whiteness as an issue in these cases because in a white-dominated culture whiteness is the taken-for-granted standard against which everything else is viewed.

Like the rest of us, scientists do not live or do their research outside the influence of ideology. For example, when people study human performance, it is important for them to understand how racial ideology influences the research questions that they ask, the people who they study, the data that they collect and the analysis and interpretation of the data. This is because scientific 'truth' depends on the facts that we choose to examine, the way that we classify those facts and the theories that we use to analyse and interpret facts. Therefore, racial ideology can exert significant influence on knowledge about racial difference as well as the processes through which people give meanings to physical traits and use those meanings to organise their lives. This issue is discussed further in the Reflect on sports box '"Jumping genes" in black bodies'.

'Jumping genes' in black bodies: why do people look for them, and what will it mean if they find them?

REFLECT ON SPORT

When people seek genetic explanations of achievements by black sports participants, many of us who study sports in society question why their search begins and where it will take us. The search for 'jumping genes' is a good example. Our questions about research on this issue are based on two factors: (1) many current ideas about the operation and effects of genes are oversimplified and misleading and (2) jumping is much more than a simple physical activity.

Oversimplified and misleading ideas about genes

Most people have great hopes for genetic research. They see genes as the building blocks of life that will enable us to explain and control everything from food supplies to human feelings, thoughts and actions. These hopes have led to research seeking 'violence genes' in people who are violent, 'intelligence genes' in people who are smart, 'power and endurance genes' in people who run fast and far, and 'jumping genes' in people who play basketball. Many people assume that, if we find the key gene, we can explain and control the thoughts and actions that it 'causes'.

According to Robert Sapolsky (2000), a professor of biology and neurology at Stanford University, this notion of the 'primacy of the gene' leads to deterministic and reductionist views of human action and social problems. The actions of human beings, he explains, cannot be reduced to particular genetic factors. Even though genes are important, they do not work independently of the environment. Research shows that genes are activated and suppressed by many environmental factors; furthermore, the *effects* of genes in our bodies are mediated by environmental factors as well.

Genes are neither autonomous nor the sole causes of important, real-life outcomes associated with our bodies and what we do with them. Some chemicals that exist in cells and other chemicals (such as hormones), which come from other parts of the body, regulate genes. Furthermore, many external environmental factors influence regulatory processes. For example, when a mother rat licks and grooms her infant, these actions are environmental stimuli that initiate biochemical events, which turn on genes related to the physical growth of the infant rat. Therefore, say

geneticists, the operation and effects of genes cannot be separated from the environment that turns them on and off and influences the expression of genetic effects. Sapolsky is hopeful about genetic research, but he explains that, as we learn more about genes, we also learn more about the environment and the connections between the two.

Genes do not exist and operate in environmental vacuums. This is true for genes related to diseases and genes related to jumping. Furthermore, we know that physical actions such as jumping, running and shooting a basketball all involve one or more clusters of multiple genes. Explaining sports performance would require studying 'at least 124 genes and thousands, perhaps millions, of combinations of those genes', and this would provide only part of an explanation (Farrey 2005). The rest would involve research on why people choose to do certain sports, why they practise, why they are motivated to practise and excel, how they are recognised and identified by coaches and sponsors and how they are able to perform under particular conditions.

This means that discovering jumping genes would be exciting, but it would *not* explain why one person jumps higher than another, *nor* would it explain why people from one population jump, on average, higher than people from other populations. Furthermore, no evidence shows that particular genes related to jumping or other complex sports performances vary systematically with skin colour or any socially constructed ideas about race and racial classifications.

Jumping is more than a physical activity

Jumping is not simply a mechanical, spring-like action initiated by a few leg muscles exploding with power. Instead, it is a total body movement involving the neck, shoulders, arms, wrists, hands, torso, waist, hips, thighs, knees, calves, ankles, feet and toes. Jumping also involves a timed coordination of the upper and lower body, a particular type of flexibility, a 'kinaesthetic feel' and a total body rhythm. It is an act of grace as much as power, a rhythmic act as much as a sudden muscular burst, an individual expression as much as an exertion. It is tied to the notion of the body in harmony with space as much as simply the overcoming of resistance with the application of physical force.

Competitors in different sports jump in different ways. Gymnasts, netball players, figure-skaters, skateboarders, mogul skiers, BMX riders, rugby lineout forwards, basketball players, ski jumpers, high jumpers, long jumpers, triple-jumpers and pole vaulters all jump, but techniques and styles vary greatly from sport to sport and person to person in each sport. The act of jumping in societies where skin colour and ethnic heritage have important social meanings is especially complex because race and ethnicity are types of performances in their own ways. These performances involve physical expressions and body movements that are integrally related to the cultural-kinaesthetic histories of particular groups. Gerald Early (1998) notes in his article 'Performance and reality: race, sports, and the modern world' that playing sports is an *ethnic performance* because the relevance and meaning of jumping vary from one cultural context to another. For example, jumping is irrelevant to the performances of world leaders, CEOs of major corporations, sports-team owners, coaches, doctors and university lecturers. The power and influence possessed by these people and the rewards they receive do not depend on their jumping abilities. This is why

the statement that 'white men can't jump' is irrelevant to most whites, including every prime minister in the histories of Australia and New Zealand, nearly all senators, CEOs and geneticists (Myers 2000). Outside of a few sports, jumping ability has nothing to do with success in everyday life or achieving positions of power and influence. White CEOs making tens of millions of dollars a year do not care that someone says they cannot jump. As Public Enemy rapped in the 1998 movie *He Got Game*, 'White men in suits don't *have* to jump'.

Studying the physical side of jumping, sprinting and distance running is important if it helps us understand human biology more fully. But this research will not provide all the answers to who jumps well in sports. Such answers also depend on our understanding of the historical, cultural and social circumstances that make jumping and running important in some people's lives and why some people work so hard to develop their jumping and running abilities. It is not wrong to hypothesise that there may be genes related to jumping, but it is naive to assume that they operate independently of environmental factors, or that they are connected with skin colour or socially constructed approaches to racial classification. Knowledge about genes is important, but it probably will never tell us much about the complex physical and cultural performance of airborne skills orchestrated by professional basketball players Brad Newley (Australia), Yao Ming (China), Dirk Nowitzki (Germany) and Manu Ginobili (Argentina). Nor will it tell us much about the vertical leaps and amazing hang time of the white European or the Chinese and Japanese volleyball players who have won so many international events. Nor will it tell us why whites have always won America's Cup yacht races. *What do you think?*

Cool pose: racial ideology, gender and social class in the USA

Many Australians and New Zealanders are prone to misinterpret the expressive sports world behaviour of African Americans. American popular culture is pervasive and many of the images of African Americans emphasise the infusion of hip-hop and other unique forms of cultural expression. There are complex interconnections between racial and gender ideologies in the social world of sports. For example, research suggests that the implications of racial ideology are different for black men than for black women (Bruening 2005; Bruening et al. 2005; Corbett & Johnson 2000; Daniels 2000; Majors 1998; Smith 2000; Solomon 2000; Winlock 2000). This is true partly because the bodies of black men have historically been viewed and socially constructed differently than the bodies of black women.

Many whites in the USA have grown up fearing the power of black male bodies, being anxious about their sexual capacities and being fascinated by their movements. Ironically, this aspect of racial ideology has created circumstances in which black male bodies have come to be valuable entertainment commodities, first on stage in music and vaudeville theatre and later on sporting fields. Black female bodies, on the other hand, have been socially constructed in sexualised terms that have not made them valuable entertainment commodities in sports (Corbett & Johnson 2000; Winlock 2000).

Race and gender have influenced the lives of African-American men in another way. Because they have systematically been denied opportunities enabling them to be successful breadwinners

and providers for wives and families, some African-American men have developed a presentation of self that is described as 'cool pose'. This presentation of self is organised around 'unique, expressive, and conspicuous styles of demeanour, speech, gesture, clothing, hairstyle, walk, stance, and handshake' (Majors 1998, p. 17). It emerges out of the frustration, self-doubt, anger and marginalisation in schools and the mainstream economy that has emasculated many African-American men.

Cool pose is all about achieving a sense of significance and respect through *interpersonal* strategies when one is denied significance and success in jobs, politics and education. Cool pose is also about being tough, detached and in control. Cool pose says different things to different people. To the white man, it says, 'Although you may have tried to hurt me time and time again, I can take it (and if I am hurting or weak, I'll never let you know).' It also says, 'See me, touch me, hear me, but, white man, you can't copy me' (Majors 1986, pp. 184–5). Cool pose is also an interpersonal strategy through which masculinity is portrayed by black boys and men who face status threats in everyday life. It is even used in this way by first- and second-graders in inner-city US schools (Hasbrook 1999; Hasbrook & Harris 1999).

Educator Richard Majors suggests that cool pose has become part of the public personas of many black males in the USA and an integral part of the sports in which many competitors are black men. Is this how personal style has become such a big part of basketball? Is this why some black competitors are known for their 'talk' as well as physical skills? Do black men use cool pose to intimidate white opponents? Does cool pose sell tickets and create spectator interest in basketball and football? Do people go to see dunks and other moves inscribed with the personas of the black men who perform them? Is cool pose the result of what happens when black men face oppressive racial and gender ideologies and the realities of class relations in the US economy? We do not know, but it is worth seeking answers to these questions (Wilson 1999).

Race logic and stacking patterns in team sports

We can also see the impact of racial ideology in sports in the patterns of positions played in team sports by participants from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Traditionally, certain position patterns have clearly reflected racial stereotypes about the abilities of white players and black players. One of the general patterns is that black competitors have seldom been assigned the so-called thinking positions in major team sports. It seems that, for many years, the white people who controlled sports teams (recruiters, coaches, administrators and owners) believed that blacks were especially good at running and catching, but they could not be leaders or call the plays. For example, typical 'thinking positions' are centre half-back and full-back in Australian football. During the 2005 AFL season, despite the abundance of Indigenous players in the AFL, not once during the season in any team or during any game was an Indigenous player listed as a full-back.

Sociologists have long been interested in these patterns and how they conform to the race logic in particular cultures. Since the early 1970s, these patterns have been identified in numerous studies. When players from a certain racial or ethnic group are either over- or under-represented at certain positions in team sports, we say that *racial stacking* exists.

We can partially summarise the research on stacking patterns in sports over the past 40 years.
- Black West Indians and black Africans in British soccer football have been clearly over-represented in wide-forward positions, whereas whites have been disproportionately found at goalkeeper and central midfield (Maguire 1988; Melnick 1988).
- British Asians are stacked as high-status batsmen, and British blacks as low-status bowlers in British cricket (Malcolm 1997).

- Black Americans on football teams have been most likely to play safety, cornerback, running back and pass receiver, whereas whites have been over-represented at quarterback, guard and middle linebacker.
- Black Americans have been stacked in forward positions whereas white Americans have been stacked in point guard positions and later head coaching roles in Australian professional basketball (Hallinan, Eddleman & Oslin 1991). Remnants of stacking in basketball may persist in court positions but, like many sports, changes in the role of coaches and number of coaches assigned to many of the teams in the elite levels of competition means that the strategic thinking decision making has shifted to the sidelines.
- Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in Australian football and Rugby League have been over-represented in the wider positions whereas they have been under-represented in the central key positions (Hallinan 1991; Hallinan, Bruce & Coram 1999). The rule changes in Rugby League have made many of the original position characteristics almost obsolete. Indeed, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders have made more significant inroads into off-field leadership positions in Rugby League than any other sports. While Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders remain virtually absent in AFL leadership roles, Arthur Beetson, Laurie Daley and Mal Meninga among others have assumed prime leadership roles in Rugby League.

Why do stacking patterns exist? This question often leads to discussions that get tied up with the race logic that is widely accepted and circulated in societies as a whole. Stuart Hall (1995) suggests that race logic is seamlessly embedded into everyday discourse. For example, former All Blacks fitness trainer Jim Blair commented:

> Significant numbers of Pacific Islanders possess fast-twitch muscle which makes them genetically predisposed towards building mass around the critical joints and being quick over short distances.
>
> *(Paul 2007b)*

In the research project undertaken by Hallinan and Bruce (2000), one of the AFL recruiting managers remarked:

> As you know with a lot of the Aboriginal boys, they tend to just live from day to day. They don't, perhaps, do lots of planning … So, you know, it's up to us to look after them the best way possible.
>
> *(p. 20)*

When they exist, racial stacking patterns generally correspond with popular beliefs about skin colour and traits such as intelligence, leadership and decision-making abilities, dependability, motivation and emotion, running and jumping skills and what many people refer to as 'instincts'. The thinking and dependability positions have generally been stacked with white players; the speed and physical reaction positions have been stacked with black players. Even when white competitors have played the 'speed positions', they have been described by many coaches and announcers as dependable and smart, and when black competitors have played the thinking and dependability positions, they sometimes have been described in terms of 'natural' physical attributes. Although this is not always the case, the patterns exist.

Of course, when people from a particular racial or ethnic group come to constitute the majority of players in a certain sport, and especially when they start to be employed as coaches, there is a decrease in stacking patterns based on dominant racial ideology. However, stacking patterns can be maintained and sometimes even intensified when the members of a racial or ethnic group become aware of how their futures in sports may be improved or hindered if they play certain positions.

It is important to remember that stacking patterns are related to race logic, and race logic differs in content and application from one culture to another and from one sport or situation to another in the same culture; it also changes over time. For example, recent New Zealand research indicates that the process through which people come to play certain positions on netball and Rugby Union teams is complex and ever-changing (Melnick 1996; Melnick & Thompson 1996). It reflects a combination of factors, including:

1. historical traditions related to ethnic relations in society as a whole

2. the history of a minority group's involvement in a particular sport

3. the proportion of minority- and majority-group members in a sport and on particular teams

4. the ethnic backgrounds of team coaches, general managers and player scouts

5. the degree to which different positions in a sport involve different skills and responsibilities

6. the way in which positions are defined in connection with current offensive and defensive strategies

7. the perspectives used by those who identify and assess player skill and recruit players for teams.

And as players' recruitment becomes increasingly international in scope, the connections between race or ethnicity and the positions played on sports teams reflect global processes of labour migration combined with the racial ideologies, racial dynamics, national stereotypes and ways sports is organised in different countries that import sports competitors (Chappell, Jones & Burden 1996; Hallinan et al. 1991; Falcous & Maguire 2005).

The occasional stereotyping of racialised identities and sports performance indicates the persistent strength of inferential racism directed against Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, Māori and Pacific Islanders at a time when anti-racist sentiment is primarily thought to be consigned to history. The negative stereotypes emanate when success or performance wanes. For example, the brilliant play of Carlos Spencer was celebrated on many occasions. However, was Carlos Spencer more likely to be negatively and racially stereotyped when following some matches such as the 2003 World Cup Semifinal? In his analysis of the mediation of Aboriginal performance in Australia, Gardiner (2003) found that successful Indigenous men and women in sports were celebrated as 'Australian' heroes and icons of national unity, but re-characterised as 'Aboriginal' when less successful. According to Gardiner, 'this attends to the process of white sports rearing black athletes' (p. 247).

ETHNIC AND RACIAL SPORTS PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Sports in Australia has a long history of racial and ethnic exclusion (Gardiner 1997; Godwell 2000; Hallinan 1991; Hallinan & Judd 2007; Maynard 2010; Rigney 2003; Tatz 1995). Men and women in all non-Anglo ethnic communities have traditionally been under-represented at all levels of competition and management in most competitive sports. Prior to the 1950s, the organisations that sponsored sports teams and events seldom opened their doors fully to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Anglo migrant groups. When members of ethnic and racial minority groups played sports in Australia, they usually played among themselves in games and events segregated by choice or by necessity (Adair & Vamplew 1997; Hughson 1992, 1997a, 1997b; Mosely 1994, 2005; Tatz 1995). By contrast Māori and Pacific Islanders have long histories of participation in many New Zealand sports such as rugby, basketball, golf, tennis, bowls, football, field hockey and netball (Hokowhitu 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005;

Obel 2001, 2004). Finding Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders, Māori or Pacific Islanders in Australian and New Zealand cricket is virtually impossible (Gemmell 2007; Ryan 2007; Tatz 1995) and even though almost all the players, support personnel and nearly 100 per cent of the spectators are white, nobody refers to cricket as a white event.

Prior to the 1950s, most whites in Australia consistently avoided playing with and against blacks. Blacks were systematically excluded from participation in white-controlled sports programs and organisations because whites believed that blacks did not have the character or fortitude to compete with them. Since the 1950s, the sports participation of blacks has been concentrated in a limited range of sports. Even today, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are under-represented in or absent from most sports at most levels of competition. This is often overlooked because when people watch the most heavily mediated sports of Australian football and Rugby League they see an abundance of Indigenous competitors. However, there is a similar pattern in Canada, the USA and in European countries with strong sporting traditions.

The exceptions to this pattern of exclusion in Australia stand out because they *are* exceptions. The under-representation of blacks in a long list of sports is much greater than the under-representation of whites in sports such as Rugby League, Rugby Union and AFL. Additionally, there are proportionately many more whites who play netball, basketball and the football codes than there are blacks who play tennis or golf at those levels. In a *white-centred* cultural setting where the lives of whites are the expected focus of attention, it is not even noticed that these sports are exclusively white. And in a *white-dominated* and *white-identified* setting where the characteristics of whites are used as the standards for judging qualifications, black competitors must play, drive, think and act like whites to be accepted as participants who are doing it the right way. For example, Tracy Taylor from the University of Technology, Sydney, conducted research investigating cultural diversity in Australian netball. Taylor reported that the non-Anglo participants in her study told her that they had not experienced any direct racial and/or ethnic vilification or exclusion. However, the participants indicated that there was a very clear expectation that all netball players and coaches conform to Anglocentric values and behavioural standards (Taylor 2004). Similarly, there have been no reported cases of racial vilification in the AFL for a number of years. However, it has been suggested that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders' participation in the AFL is a case of 'enlightened racism' (Hallinan, Bruce & Burke 2005; Hallinan & Judd 2008). The notion of enlightened

Anthony Mundine has publicly contested many of the assumptions made about Indigenous players in Australia. Mundine also captures the challenges associated with oversimplifying identity. He is both Indigenous and Muslim— the latter sitting uncomfortably with many journalists such as Jeff Wells from The Daily Telegraph *who described Mundine as 'un-Australian'.*

(*Source:* Getty Images)

racism was generated by Jhally and Lewis's analysis of black characters in the television shows *The Cosby Show* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. Jhally and Lewis argued that the main characters in these US TV shows were portrayed to suit the white idealisation of race relations in that country. Similarly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players in the AFL were likewise celebrated as a race relations success story but nevertheless participated in the same narrowcasted way as the TV characters. That is, they have been limited to certain roles and positions none of which involve any threat to white hegemony (Hallinan, Bruce & Burke 2005).

New Zealand journalist Gregor Paul declared that Rugby Union in New Zealand had never experienced any prejudicial conduct or barriers. According to Paul, 'social barriers and prejudices might have existed in New Zealand's wider society throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but not in rugby'. Paul (2007a) was writing about the impact of the dramatic influx of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand rugby—particularly in and around Auckland. Brendan Hokowhitu from the University of Otago has written extensively on Māori participation in New Zealand sports. Still, the management and coaching of Rugby Union in New Zealand rests mostly with *Pākehās*.

Often the quantity of players from Indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds is cited as evidence of the elimination of racially and culturally based barriers. However, closer examination of leadership roles and social mobility is required for anyone studying the longstanding barriers related to race, ethnicity or gender.

Throughout Australian sporting history, the participation of Indigenous women has been severely limited and has received little attention, apart from that given to occasional Olympic medal winners in athletics events, such as Cathy Freeman (Hallinan & Bruce 2000) and Nova Peris-Kneebone (Gardiner 2003). Black women suffer the consequences of gender and racial ideologies. Apart from a handful of studies, little is known about the unique experiences of female competitors, even those participating today (Hallinan & Bruce 2000; Taylor 2004; Tatz 1995).

Overall, sports participation rates in middle and upper-middle income white communities in Australia are much higher than those in most predominantly non-Anglo and Indigenous communities, especially those where resources are scarce. Racial ideology causes many people to overlook this fact. Many people see only the male competitors who make high salaries in high-profile sports and then assume that discrimination is gone. This exemplifies how dominant racial ideology influences what people see in their social worlds and what they define as problems.

THE DYNAMICS OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN SPORTS

Racial and ethnic relations in most sports settings are better today than in the past, but many changes are needed before sports are a model of intergroup fairness. The challenges faced today are different from the ones faced 20 years ago, and experience shows that they will always be a part of social life. When one set of challenges is met, a new social situation is created, and it presents its own challenges. For example, once racial and ethnic segregation is eliminated and people come together, there is the challenge of living, working and playing with people who have diverse experiences and cultures. Meeting this challenge requires a commitment to equal treatment, *plus* learning about the perspectives of others, understanding how they define and give meaning to the world around them and then determining how to form and maintain relationships while respecting differences, making compromises and supporting one another in the pursuit of goals that may not always be shared. None of this is easy, and challenges are never met once and for all time.

Many people think in fairytale terms when it comes to racial and ethnic relations: they believe that opening a door so that others may enter a social world is all that is needed to achieve racial

and ethnic harmony. However, coming together is just the first step in a never-ending process of nurturing relationships, producing a representative culture and sharing power with others. Racial and ethnic diversity brings potential vitality and creativity to a team, organisation or society, but this potential does not automatically become reality. It requires constant awareness, commitment and work to achieve and maintain it.

The following sections deal with three major challenges related to racial and ethnic relations in sports today: (1) eliminating racial and ethnic exclusion in sports participation, (2) dealing with and managing racial and ethnic diversity by creating an inclusive culture on sporting teams and in sporting organisations and (3) integrating positions of power in sporting organisations.

Eliminating racial and ethnic exclusion in sports

Why are some sports characterised by disproportionately high rates of participation by racial and ethnic minorities, whereas others have little or no racial or ethnic diversity? When sociologist Harry Edwards (1973) answered this question in the early 1970s, he said that certain sports had built-in incentives for eliminating racial segregation. These incentives included the following:

1. The people who control teams that make money when they win games benefit financially when they do not exclude players who can help them win games.

2. The individual performances of competitors can be measured in concrete, objective terms that are less likely to be influenced by racial ideology than is the case in other occupations.

3. Sports teams are organised so that all players benefit when a team-mate performs well, regardless of the team-mate's skin colour or ethnicity.

4. When competitors play well on a sports team there is no expectation that they will be promoted into leadership positions where they have control over other players.

5. The success of most sports teams does not depend on friendships and off-the-field social relationships between team-mates, so players are not expected to befriend team-mates from racial or ethnic backgrounds different from their own.

6. When ethnic minority competitors are signed to a contract, they remain under the control of (white) coaches, managers, administrators and owners in the organisational structure of a sports or sporting team.

Identity extinction? Anglicising club names and images in sports

REFLECT ON SPORT

As part of their course of study, students in the sociology of sports classes at Victoria University are presented with a hypothetical, in order to extract voting sentiment based around gender and ethnic identity. Students are asked to nominate from a list of three candidates who they believe would receive the most votes in a parliamentary election. The candidates are: Margaret Johns, Peter Morris and Panayiotis Montiadis. Without exception, students have nominated Peter Morris as 'the winner'. Students are informed that Peter Morris—a former Minister for Transport in the Whitlam Federal government—changed his name from Panayiotis Montiadis. The ethnocentric gendered bias in the students' selection has been absolutely consistent over several years. Follow-up discussions centre upon the issues concerning identity and opportunity in the

IDENTITY EXTINCTION? ANGLICISING CLUB NAMES AND IMAGES IN SPORTS *continued*

world at large. Many other Australian families have changed or modified their original names to a name more in line with Anglocentric language; for example, former Australian Test cricketer Len Pascoe (Durtanovich), former Victorian Premier Steve Bracks (Barakat), former Australian football goalkeeper Mark Bosnich (Bosnic). By far the most publicised identity issue has been the long-running debate over club names and images in Australian football. Football in Australia has been overwhelmingly sustained over

SRPSKI SP⚽RTSKI CENTAR
SERBIAN SPORTS CENTRE INC.

FOOD AND DRINK TOKEN
CEVAPI (ROLL)

(*Source:* Chris Hallinan)

many decades by immigrant communities whose original homelands were in Europe and the UK. It is within football that most of the pressure to anglicise names and images has occurred (Georgakis 2000; Hallinan & Krotee 1993; Hallinan & Hughson 2008; Hughson 1992, 1997a, 1997b; Mosely 1994, 2005). John Hughson (2000) from the University of Otago has published a large volume of work examining the lived experience of football involvement with non-Anglo-based clubs. Hughson has argued that the mass media has exaggerated football crowd behaviour as a deviant cultural practice. As such, football as a sport has been marginalised because of its incongruent positioning within the hegemonic Anglocentric sports world. In their review of Australian soccer cultural positioning, Hallinan and Hughson (2008) assert that non-Anglo football clubs have been the subject of sustained pressure from governments and authorities to divest themselves of any 'foreign' allegiance. As such, Sydney Croatia became Sydney United, South Melbourne Hellas became South Melbourne Lakers, Preston Macedonia became Preston Lions. The newly formed Hyundai A-League teams, including the Wellington Phoenix, were forbidden to have a 'political' identity. No doubt many critics and fans alike welcome the removal of clubs associated with non-Anglo ethnic populations. Hallinan and Hughson reflect that the new emphasis on a narrow Anglocentric version of 'Australian' identity is reminiscent of the old immigration policy of assimilation which was abandoned by the major political parties in the 1970s. The major political parties subsequently showed bipartisan support for multiculturalism. Hallinan and Hughson argue that the extinction of non-Anglo names and images in the premier football league results in 'a sanitised cosmopolitanism (which) allows A-league teams to include players from a range of ethnic backgrounds, yet the same teams cannot be seen to represent the cultural difference residing in Australian suburbs'. All hegemonic identity extinction is wrong. *What do you think?*

These six incentives offset the threats that whites often perceive when they consider racial and ethnic desegregation in non-sports situations and organisations. When the people who controlled professional teams realised that they could benefit financially from recruiting ethnic minority players without giving up power and control or upsetting the existing structure and relationships in their sports, they began to do so.

Desegregation has come more slowly in sports lacking these incentives. This is why golf, tennis, swimming and other sports played in private clubs where social interaction is personal and often involves relationships between males and females have been slow to welcome racial and ethnic diversity. As the degree of social closeness increases in any setting, including sports, people are more likely to enforce various forms of exclusion. When others define exclusion as unfair and challenge it, racial and ethnic conflict often occurs. The history of this conflict shows that policies of racial and ethnic exclusion in many sports are changed only when government legislation makes them illegal or when civil rights lawsuits threaten the financial assets of people and organisations that have proven histories of discrimination.

Informal practices of racial and ethnic exclusion still remain in some private sports clubs. However, the most significant forms of racial and ethnic exclusion today occur at the community level where they are hidden behind policies that tie sports participation to fees and access to personal transportation. Some communities claim to have open sports programs when in reality there are fewer facilities where racial and ethnic minorities live, when fees preclude participation and when there is no convenient access to the transportation required for participation.

As more sports become organised by nonprofit and commercial organisations, there is a tendency for class-based patterns of exclusion to seriously restrict participation by people in some racial and ethnic groups. Even though this form of exclusion is different from exclusion based solely on race and ethnicity, its effects are much the same, and they are more difficult to attack on the grounds that they violate civil rights. Eliminating forms of exclusion related to socioeconomic status that overlap with race and ethnicity will be one of the most difficult challenges of this century.

Dealing with and managing racial and ethnic diversity in sports

As sports become more global, as teams recruit players from around the world and as global migration creates pressures to develop racially and ethnically sensitive policies related to all aspects of sports, there will be many new racial and ethnic challenges faced by players, coaches, team administrators and even spectators. It is naive to think that the racial and ethnic issues that exist around the world today have no impact on sports or that sports can effectively eliminate these issues once and for all time.

The participation of Asian-born competitors in elite American-based sports has elicited prejudiced statements from some competitors. When US Olympic team member Shaquille O'Neal was playing basketball for the Los Angeles Lakers in 2003, he responded to a journalist's question about playing against Chinese Olympian Yao Ming by saying, 'Tell Yao Ming, "ching-chong-yang-wah-ah-so"'. Pro golfer Jan Stevenson, a native of Australia, said in 2003 that Asian women golfers 'are killing our tour'. She explained that the Asian pros did not promote women's golf because they lacked emotional expressiveness, refused to speak English (even when they could do so) and rarely spoke to fans and reporters (Adelson 2002; Blauvelt 2003). Public comments such as these are rare, but they point to the challenges faced when people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds participate in sports that are organised around the cultural orientations and traditions of Europe and the USA. The cultural orientations and traditions become important because many of the major world sports leagues are based in these countries. (See discussions of globalisation in Chapter 13.)

In the USA, translators are used on ice hockey and baseball teams, cultural diversity training is needed, coaches must learn new ways to communicate effectively and the marketing departments for teams must learn how to promote an ethnically diverse team to predominantly white, European-American fans. Ethnic and cultural issues enter into sponsorship considerations and

the products sold at games. Cultural and ethnic awareness is now an important qualification for employees who handle team advertising and sponsorship deals.

A significant number of Australian women have been signed to play in the US-based professional league Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). Lauren Jackson was the league's MVP (most valuable player) in 2007 and 2010. Teams in the WNBA now face situations in which many, if not the majority, of their players are black, whereas 90 to 95 per cent of their season ticket holders are white. Many people are aware of this issue although there have been few public discussions about it. Race and race relations is not something that people feel comfortable talking about in public settings, even though they do talk about it in private, often among friends from the same racial or ethnic background. Research shows that avoiding discussions of race and ethnicity is not due to personal prejudices or underlying racism as much as it is due to a civic etiquette that discourages public discussions of these issues (Eliasoph 1999). This etiquette keeps racial and ethnic issues 'off the table' and prevents people from discussing them thoughtfully and publicly—even in many university classrooms.

Many of the best male football players from Australia and New Zealand are based in Western Europe. Football teams in Western Europe increasingly face the challenge of coping with new racial and ethnic tensions created by high rates of migration from Africa and Eastern Europe. These challenges are related to matters of national identity, labour migration and citizenship status. Populist leaders in some nations do not want their national teams to include players whose ancestors may have come from another country, and some fans use players with African or South Asian backgrounds as scapegoats for social and economic problems in their lives. These issues will not go away any time soon in Europe, the USA or other parts of the world. Challenges related to managing racial and ethnic relations are here to stay, although they will change over time.

Tackling Māori masculinity: do Māori and non-Māori narrowcast Māori men into physicality and toughness?

REFLECT ON SPORT

It is crucial to understand the very different Australian and New Zealand race relations contexts, modes of settlement, histories and ultimately social constructions of Māori Peoples versus Australian Aboriginal Peoples. While the history of race relations in Australia is mostly characterised by exclusion, the same cannot be said of New Zealand. Indeed, New Zealand has a long history of accommodation in most sports. However, the over-representation of Māori in most sports—particularly Rugby Union and Rugby League—has raised questions about whether the rugby pathways have contributed to racialised stereotypes anchored around physicality and toughness. Brendan Hokowhitu has written experientially about the importance of sports in his upbringing. In his research publication entitled 'Tackling Māori masculinity: a colonial genealogy of savagery and sports', Hokowhitu (2004a) introduced this by describing how as a Māori youngster he enthusiastically engaged in the rigours of rugby and other similar activities. Such sporting activities were an embedded part of the life of boys in rural New Zealand. However, while New Zealand masculinity might have been captured in the physicality of rugby, Hokowhitu discovered that the assumptions made by the world at large regarding Māori potential were limited. In fact, he was told in secondary school by a visiting careers advisor that he should abandon any notion of serious study: 'PE is not for you. It involves biology, anatomy, physiology and other scientific

TACKLING MĀORI MASCULINITY: DO MĀORI AND NON-MĀORI
NARROWCAST MĀORI MEN INTO PHYSICALITY AND TOUGHNESS? *continued*

(*Source: TBC*)

subjects: it's not just about running around and jumping' (pp. 259–60). Many years later after successfully graduating from university, he returned to his home town as a physical education teacher mindful of providing positive learning opportunities and experiences. Unfortunately, he encountered a systemic breakdown in this regard in that the school and its teachers had facilitated an environment that allowed Māori students to forsake academic pursuits and focus their attention on physical education classes, netball or rugby practice. These students had reduced their ambitions to sports only.

These experiences and observations ultimately led Brendan to study the identity constructions of *tāne* (Māori men) and the role of the New Zealand education system in perpetuating racist notions of Māori masculine physicality. He contends that sports in New Zealand has served as a racial arena in that it 'acts as a contemporary conduit to channel *tāne* into the physical realm' (p. 262). The contemporary masculinity that positions Māori sportsmen as the spectacle and sports as the site for 'traditional' Māori masculinity are evident in the New Zealand Warriors in the National Rugby League, the Waikato Chiefs Super-14 team and the nature of the Adidas commercials based on the All Blacks. (See Chapter 11 for a critical analysis by Jackson and Hokowhitu (2002) of the commercialisation of the haka.) According to Hokowhitu, these contemporary identities and motifs are an outgrowth of a series of historically situated ideas which were derived from:

Tāne as unenlightened,

Tāne as practically minded and physical,

Tāne as natural sportsmen,

TACKLING MĀORI MASCULINITY: DO MĀORI AND NON-MĀORI NARROWCAST

MĀORI MEN INTO PHYSICALITY AND TOUGHNESS? *continued*

Tāne sporting success as a matter of evolution and genetics, and the
channelling of Māori boys into sports.

Hokowhitu argues that, despite mainstream portrayal and re-iteration of the bundle of attributes it assigns to Māori, many are able to live beyond those constricted boundaries and mainstream narratives of Māori masculinity. Hokowhitu concludes by stating that Māori were once limited to the physical domain by being forced into manual labour after the confiscation of their land, while being subjected to limited options in the state-run education system. In contemporary New Zealand, Māori representation is largely framed through sports—especially those that place a premium on physicality and toughness. In this way, the narrowcasting of Māori opportunity by non-Māori and Māori results in an outcome for Māori that is a form of racism. *What do you think?*

Integrating positions of power in sporting organisations

Despite progressive changes in many sports, positions of power and control are held primarily by white men. There are exceptions to this, but they do not eliminate pervasive and persistent racial and ethnic inequalities related to power and control in sports. Data on who holds positions of power change every year, and it is difficult to obtain consistent information from sporting teams and organisations. Generally, Anglo males are over-represented in every power position in the major sports in Australia and New Zealand as well as in other countries, such as the USA. Indigenous participants are over-represented among players in a few sports, but they generally play under the control and management of whites (Hallinan & Judd 2007, 2008, 2009; Hokowhitu 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Obel 2001, 2004; Tatz 1995).

Patterns are similar in most other sporting organisations at nearly all levels of competition. For example, during the 2003 WNBA season, 61 per cent of the players were black and 3 per cent were Latina, but 72 per cent of all assistant and head coaches were white. Of the top administrators, 80 per cent were white, 15 per cent were black, and 5 per cent were Latina. Apart from general racial issues in sports, the under-representation of blacks and other minorities in coaching and administration jobs has been widely publicised since the mid-1980s. Although this issue will be discussed further in Chapter 10, it is important to note that blacks and Latinos hired as NBA coaches in the USA have generally had longer and more productive playing careers than the whites who are hired as coaches (Rimer 1996). Many white coaches had mediocre or unimpressive playing careers, and some have unimpressive past coaching records as well. Meanwhile, minority candidates with similar or better playing careers are routinely passed over as coaching candidates in a range of sports. It seems that, because coaching and administrative abilities cannot be measured as objectively as playing abilities, the subjective feelings of those doing the hiring come into play when coaching and top management candidates are assessed (Lavoie & Wib 1994).

Prospects for change

People do not give up racial and ethnic beliefs easily, especially when they come in the form of well-established ideologies deeply rooted in their cultures. For example, Karen Farquharson

of Swinburne University and Tim Marjoribanks of the University of Melbourne analysed the media discourses in 33 Australian newspapers featuring the racial vilification case of test crick-eter Darren Lehmann. They concluded that within Australia 'race' was mobilised as a symbol of inclusion/exclusion (Farquharson & Marjoribanks 2006). Those who have benefited from domi-nant racial ideology often resist changes in the relationships and social structures that reproduce it. This is why certain expressions of racism have remained a part of sports.

Sports may bring people together, but they do not automatically lead them to adopt tolerant attitudes or change longstanding policies of exclusion. Team owners, general managers and coaches in Australia and New Zealand worked with black and Indigenous competitors for many years before they ever employed black or Indigenous coaches. It often requires social and legal pressures to force people in power positions to act more affirmatively in their hiring practices. In the meantime, blacks and other non-Anglo ethnic minorities remain under-represented in coaching and administration.

Although there is resistance to certain types of changes in sports, many sporting organisations are more progressive than other organisations when it comes to many aspects of racial and ethnic relations. However, good things do not happen automatically or as often as many think; nor do changes in people's attitudes automatically translate into changes in the overall organisation of sports. Challenging the negative beliefs and attitudes of individuals is one thing; changing the relationships and social structures that have been built on those beliefs and attitudes is another. Both changes are needed, but neither occurs automatically just because sports brings people together in the same locker rooms and stadiums.

Racial and ethnic relations will improve in sports only when those who have power work to bring people together in ways that confront and challenge racial and ethnic issues. This means that changes must be initiated and supported by whites as well as members of ethnic minorities, or else they will fail (Oglesby & Schrader 2000). It has never been easy for people to deal with racial and ethnic issues, but if it can be done in sports, it would attract public attention and pos-sibly inspire changes in other spheres of life.

Change also requires a new vocabulary to deal with racial and ethnic diversity in social life and promote inclusive practices and policies. A vocabulary organised around the belief that skin colour or ethnicity signifies a unique biological essence only perpetuates racial and ethnic discrimination. In connection with sports, there is a need for research to go beyond documenting racial and eth-nic performance differences and explain how social and cultural factors, including racial ideolo-gies, create and perpetuate differences. Simply documenting differences without explaining them too often reproduces the very racial ideologies that have caused hatred, turmoil and confusion in much of the world for nearly 300 years. This is why many scholars in the sociology of sports now ask research questions about the meanings that people give to physical and cultural characteristics and how those meanings influence actions, relationships and social organisation.

The racial and ethnic diversity training sessions used over the past two decades have produced some changes, but promoting positive changes in intergroup relations today requires training lead-ers to create more inclusive cultures and power structures in sporting organisations. This means that training sessions should go beyond players and include everyone from team owners and CEOs to the people in middle management, coaching, marketing and public information. One of the prob-lems with diversity training sessions in the past is that they were directed at low-level employees who often did not take them seriously because they did not see their superiors taking them seriously.

Even people who are sensitive to diversity issues require opportunities to learn new things about the perspectives of those whose experiences and cultures are different from our own. This means that effective training sessions are organised, in part, around the perspectives of racial and ethnic minorities. This is an essential strategy if positive changes are to occur. When making things better means doing them to fit the interests of those currently in power, real change is unlikely.

When Yao Ming entered the NBA, he disrupted widespread stereotypes about the physical characteristics of Chinese people. As a result, many people realised that it is not possible to use a single generalisation to describe 1.4 billion Chinese people from dozens of ethnic populations that have little in common physically or culturally.

(*Source:* EyePress, AP/Wide World Photos)

Summary

ARE RACE AND ETHNICITY IMPORTANT IN SPORTS?

Racial and ethnic issues exist in sports, just as they exist in most other spheres of social life. As people watch, play and talk about sports, they often take into account ideas about skin colour and ethnicity. The meanings given to skin colour and ethnic background influence access to sports participation—and the decisions that people make about sports in their lives. *Race* refers to a category of people identified through a classification system based on meanings given to physical traits among humans; *ethnicity* refers to collections of people identified in terms of their shared cultural heritage. Racial and ethnic minorities are populations that have endured systematic forms of discrimination in society.

The idea of race has a complex history, but it has served as the foundation for racial ideology, which people use to identify and make sense of racial differences. Racial ideology, like other social constructions, changes over time as ideas and relationships change. However, over the past century, dominant racial ideology has led many people to erroneously assume that there are important biological and cognitive differences and that these differences explain the success of some population groups in certain sports and sports positions.

Racial ideology has influenced the ways that many people connect skin colour with sports performance. At the same time, it has influenced the ways that some whites make sports

participation decisions and the ways that many people explain the performance of black males who excel in sports. Race, gender and class relations in the USA have combined to create a context in which black males emphasise a personal presentation of self that has been described as 'cool pose', a stylised persona that has added to the commodity value of the black male body in sports and enabled some black competitors to use widely accepted ideas about race to intimidate opponents, especially white opponents, in sports.

Sports participation patterns among Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, Māori and Pacific Islander populations all have unique histories. Combinations of historical, cultural and social factors have influenced those histories. However, sports participation usually occurs under terms set by the dominant Anglo ethnic population in the cities and communities of Australia and New Zealand. Minority populations are seldom able to use sports to challenge the power and privilege of the dominant group, even though particular individuals may experience great personal success in sports.

The fact that some sports have histories of racially and ethnically mixed participation does not mean that problems have been eliminated. Harmonious racial and ethnic relations never occur automatically, and ethnic harmony is never established once and for all time. As current problems are solved, new relationships and new challenges are created. This means that racial and ethnic issues require regular attention if challenges are to be successfully anticipated and met. Success also depends on whether members of the dominant Anglo ethnic population see value in racial and ethnic diversity and commit themselves to dealing with diversity issues alongside those who have different ethnic backgrounds.

Sports continue to be a site for racial and ethnic problems. However, it is important to acknowledge that, despite problems, sports can also be a site for challenging racial ideology and transforming ethnic relations. This happens only when people in sports plan strategies to encourage critical awareness of ethnic prejudices, racist ideas and forms of discrimination built into the cultures and structures of sporting organisations. This awareness is required to eliminate ethnic exclusion in sports, deal with and manage ethnic diversity and integrate ethnic minorities into the power structures of sporting organisations. Without this awareness, ethnic relations often become volatile and lead to overt forms of hostility.

Online LearningCentre   *Links to relevant websites are available online.*
For further exploration of this chapter topic go to **www.mhhe.com/au/coakley2e**

CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Recent research in biology and genetics has led to the conclusion that the concept of race has no biological validity. Explain what this means, why it is so difficult for many people to accept and how race is different from ethnicity.

2. Data clearly suggest that it is difficult to integrate positions of power in sporting organisations. What are the indications of this, and why has it been so difficult for people from certain racial and ethnic backgrounds to move up into positions of power in sporting organisations?

3. Ethnic stereotypes sometimes influence people's perceptions and expectations when it comes to sports ability. How have stereotypes about non-Anglo migrants influenced ideas about ability and participation in sport?

FURTHER READING

Hallinan, C & Hughson, J 2010 *The Containment of Soccer in Australia: Fencing Off the World Game*, Routledge, London. (A collection of 10 chapters raising various aspects of the importance of soccer football to discussions of cultural diversity and national consciousness).

Judd, B 2008, *On the Boundary Line: Colonial Identity in Football*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne. (A landmark publication by an Indigenous author that utilises the popularity of Australian rules football to examine what it means to be Anglo-Australian or Aboriginal Australian).

Hallinan, C & Jackson, S 2008, *Social and Cultural Diversity in a Sporting World*, Elsevier/ Emerald, London. (Contains 13 chapters using cultural diversity as the key conceptual framework. Several of the chapters concern subject matter dealing directly with Australia and New Zealand).

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Sample chapter