

## (SP) AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN DOCTORAL SPORT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

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### Introduction

In the United States before the Civil War enslaved Africans in America, they were not allowed to be educated. After the Civil War, the slaves were freed; however, educational opportunities were limited. African Americans were segregated from the majority population and were not allowed to attend schools with Whites. During this process African Americans did not have access to the same caliber of books, education and facilities. Under the planning of Thurgood Marshall, the first African American Supreme Court Justice, there was a campaign to attack segregation in public, professional and graduate schools, which established legal precedent weakening the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision, with its standard "separate but equal" accommodations. Subsequently, with Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, which reversed the Plessy v. Ferguson decision, African Americans have made great strides in many areas, particularly in academia.

This study will seek to identify what inequalities in treatment are perceived by African American doctoral graduates as impacting on their experience as doctoral students in sport management more than fifty years after Brown v. Board of Education. There is a dearth of empirical investigation within the field of sport management addressing African Americans and their perception of their doctoral programs. This new academic discipline, less than twenty years old, is nebulous in many aspects of self-examination. There is a strong need for quantitative and qualitative empirical research within this field (Olafson, 1990). Zakrajsek (1993) strongly urges professionals in the field to research and create a strong body of literature that will substantiate and identify these professionals and the direction to which they are going.

There are very few journals devoted to the field and much of the research has used theoretical and conceptual frameworks from other more established fields, (i.e., psychology, sociology, business, etc). Consequently, there were no studies reported in the *Journal of Sport Management*, *the Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, and the *International Journal of Sport Management* or *Sport Marketing Quarterly* on African American Sport Management Doctoral Students and their experiences. This exploratory research shall be fundamental in future literature.

Facing a diversified student population, and a perceived acknowledgement of human equality, graduate programs recruit quality students annually for admission consideration. Once the students have gained admittance into their programs, it is imperative to know whether or not students perceive that they were treated fairly and able to complete their programs successfully. There are no approved doctoral programs in Sport Management housed at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's), according to the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM). It is, however, important to note that Grambling State University is the only HBCU that has a

graduate level program in the field of Sport Administration (Master's in Sport Administration).

### **Methods**

This study was a qualitative, non-experimental, cross sectional study. The survey consisted of four demographic questions and ten open-ended questions pertaining to experiences within the graduate program. All African American sport management doctoral graduates had an opportunity to complete the survey. According to Cawley (2001), there are eight programs that offer graduate degree programs in Sport Management. All universities were used for this investigation, yielding a census, instead of a sample. It was found that there were sixteen African Americans that have graduated with doctoral degrees in Sport Management. Twelve of the sixteen graduates responded to the survey, yielding a seventy five percent return rate.

This research may motivate other academicians to investigate African Americans and their perceptions of their graduate degree programs. Further recommendations include other minorities in Sport Management in the United States.

### **Results**

Actual data will be presented during this presentation of all the respondents for all questions. There were six males and six females that responded. There were no gender differences found. All respondents came from predominantly White institutions. Results of this qualitative study yielded very common themes. Participants recorded issues of racism from professors and students. They felt isolated and they felt that faculty was intentionally trying to stop them from graduating and failing their dissertation defenses. Participants reported being treated differently from their White counterparts and the need for more African American faculty.

### **Discussion**

The research obtained from this study proved to be very consistent with the majority of research findings identified in the review of literature. African American doctoral students in this study felt isolated and perceived themselves as being treated unfairly by their White professors. They wished to receive fair treatment in order to facilitate their successful matriculation. Even fifty years after the Brown vs. Board of Education, which proved that separate education was not equal, African Americans still perceive themselves as not being given the same opportunities as their White counterparts. It will be crucial for legislators and university administrators to investigate these issues and make decisions that will benefit all those who are seeking terminal degrees from all higher education institutions. It is recommended from this study that an examination be conducted into the experiences of other minorities, such Hispanic-American, and Asian-American groups.

### **References**

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