

# Leaving Sport: A Meta-Analysis Of Racial Differences In Occupational Turnover

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## Aim of the research

In many sport contexts, racial minorities participate at levels that are beyond their representation in society. Despite the opportunities for participation, racial minorities remain largely under-represented in coaching and administrative roles (for an overview, see Cunningham, 2015). In offering explanations for this phenomena, some researchers have suggested that racial minorities leave the sport context sooner than do Whites (e.g., Cunningham, 2010). The purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of these claims through meta-analysis.

## Theoretical background

We ground our work in systemic racism theory (Feagin, 2006), which suggests that racism is endemic in society and its institutions. One such institution is sport, where racial minorities have long been oppressed and Whiteness is the standard (see also Hylton, 2005). From a systemic racism perspective, racial minorities are likely to experience barriers in the form of discrimination and limited opportunities for career advancement. Faced with these dim job prospects, racial minorities might then pursue other work opportunities, outside of sport. These possibilities suggest that, relative to Whites, racial minorities working in sport are likely to experience discrimination (Hypothesis 1), have fewer advancement opportunities (Hypothesis 2), and have higher occupational turnover intentions (Hypothesis 3).

While individual researchers have explored these topics through qualitative and, in some cases, quantitative analyses, systematic integration of these findings is lacking. Therein lies the importance of meta-analysis, or a "quantitative procedures used to statistically combine the results of studies" (Cooper, 2009, p. 6). Through this technique, researchers are able to parcel out sources of error to determine better estimates of effect. Despite the benefits of meta-analysis, no researchers have employed this technique to examine racism and discrimination in sport. In this study, we address this shortcoming.

## Methodology, research design, and data analysis

We examined these hypotheses through meta-analysis and began by searching relevant studies. We searched various databases, including PSYCArticles, Sport Discuss, and EBSCO for articles, theses, and dissertations on the topic. We also manually reviewed the reference lists of the works we initially identified.

Studies were included if they were quantitative in nature (a necessary condition for meta-analysis), measured the constructs under consideration, and included the necessary statistical information for data aggregation. We used Comprehensive Meta-Analysis software to analyze the data. For each hypothesis, we report the effect size ( $d$ ), 90 percent confidence interval, and associated  $z$ -score and  $p$ -value.

## Results, discussion, and implications

Five studies were included in the analysis, with a collective sample of 1244 persons working in sport. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, racial minorities reported greater discrimination than their White peers:  $d = .735$  (90% CI: .510, .961),  $z = 6.382$ ,  $p < .001$ . Hypothesis 2 was also supported, as racial minorities anticipated fewer opportunities for career advancement:  $d = -.414$  (90% CI: -.567, -.262),  $z = -5.314$ ,  $p < .001$ . Finally, racial minorities had greater occupational turnover intentions than did Whites:  $d = .273$  (90% CI: .137, .408),  $z = 3.947$ ,  $p < .001$ ; thus, Hypothesis 3 was also supported.

Findings from the study support systemic racism theory (Feagin, 2006) and the notion that one reason for the under-representation of racial minorities in leadership positions is their faster exit from the profession, relative to Whites. That noted, the meta-analysis allowed us to examine the magnitude of the differences via effect sizes. While the effects of discrimination and advancement opportunities were large and medium, respectively, the effect size for occupational turnover was statistically significant but practically small (Cohen, 1988). Thus, although they experience various forms of systemic bias, racial minorities are only slightly more likely to leave sport. One way to reverse this trend is to make sport more inclusive, ensuring all persons have the chance to succeed.

## References

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