Title: Off-colour Landscape: Framing Race Equality in Sport Coaching

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Abstract

The article examines how UK sport organisations have framed race equality and diversity, in sport coaching. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain insight into organisational perspectives towards 'race', ethnicity, racial equality, and whiteness. Using Critical Race Theory and Black feminism, colour-blind practices were found to reinforce a denial that 'race' is a salient factor underpinning inequalities in coaching. The dominant practices employed by key stakeholders are discussed under three themes: equating diversity as inclusion; fore fronting meritocracy and individual agency; and framing whiteness. We argue that these practices sustain the institutional racialised processes and formations that serve to normalise and privilege whiteness. We conclude that for Black and minoritised ethnic coaches to become key actors in sport coaching in the UK 'race' and racial equality need to be centred in research, policy and practice.

Keywords: Sport coaching; Critical Race Theory; Colour-blind; Whiteness; Black feminism, 'Race';

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Introduction

This article develops our understanding of key stakeholders in sport coaching and their perspectives on 'race' and diversity[i] in the United Kingdom (UK). Specifically, we explore the opinions, attitudes and ideologies of stakeholders regarding 'race', ethnicity, racial equality, diversity, and whiteness in relation to sports coaching. Contrary to the popular belief that sport is a platform for equality and diversity, research reaffirms that sport coaching remains an arena in which interconnecting disparities of 'race', ethnicity, gender (as well as other social categories) create structured power relations that serve to reinforce patterns of inclusion / exclusion (Armstrong, 2007; King, 2001; 2004; 2007; Long, Hylton, Spracklen, Ratna, & Bailey, 2009; Scraton, Caudwell, & Holland, 2005; Sporting Equals, 2011; Sports People's Think Tank, 2014). Yet, the concepts of 'sport for all', equality of opportunity and inclusion have not been subject to rigorous analysis in sport or sport coaching research (Author B, 2012), with the exception of a few reports (Norman, North, Hylton, Flintoff, & Rankin, 2014; Sporting Equals, 2011). Contributing to the sociology of coaching literature that focuses on the social dynamics of the sport coaching context, for example Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, (2009), Jones (2006a, 2006b) and Denison (2007; 2010) to name a few, we critically examine racial diversity within sport coaching. This has been largely ignored within existing sport research and literature.

This article examines organisational perspectives on racial equality and diversity in sport coaching. In doing so, we shift the popular critical gaze from the oppression of 'others' who are marginalised, to the role of sport institutions and those implicated in perpetuating the systemic processes and structures that sustain exclusionary power relations (Burdsey, 2014; Omi & Winant, 2002). Crucially, this focus on the dominant institutional narrative was not

intended to re-centre whiteness and White people. Rather, our aim has been to reveal, analyse and challenge the construction, reinforcement and perpetuation of whiteness. Specifically, we examine how these processes within sport coaching institutions contribute to (re)producing White dominance and privilege (Author B, 2009; Hylton & Lawrence, 2015; Hylton & Morpeth, 2012; King, 2004; 2007; Long & Hylton, 2002; McDonald, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). We further expect to inform the approaches taken to implement racial equality and diversity policies in sport coaching, and enable those working within this field to acknowledge how their ideas frame racialised practices. In the way that critical race theorists and Black feminists seek to disrupt dominant ideologies, we do this be centring issues that have historically been on the margins of sport coaching.

This paper is divided into five sections. In order to situate the empirical research presented in this paper, the first section provides a brief overview of the UK sport coaching landscape and the context of racial equality and diversity. Second, we outline our Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black feminism approach, employed together as the framework for this research. Third, we detail the methodology employed to examine organisational perspectives on racial equality in sport coaching. In the fourth section, we discuss our findings under three themes and in the fifth section, conclude with suggestions for sport and coaching policy makers, practitioners and researchers to centre 'race' and racial equality in research, policy and practice.

The Sport Coaching Landscape

The existing research evidences that Black and minoritised ethnic (BME)[ii] men and women are under-represented in all positions of organisation and governance in UK sport (Burdsey, 2004; Hylton & Morpeth, 2012; Long & Hylton, 2002; The BME Sports Network East, 2005). In particular, research has reported a disproportionate under-representation of Black[iii] sport

coaches (Bradbury, Sterkenburg, & Mignon, 2014; Burdsey, 2007; King, 2004; Lambourne & Higginson, 2006; Long et al., 2009; North, 2009; Sporting Equals, 2011; sports coach UK, 2011; Sports People's Think Tank, 2014). This under-representation has been prominently illustrated in the quantitative studies of qualified coaches in NGBs published by North in 2009 as well as sports coach UK (scUK) in 2011, the leading UK coaching agency that works principally with NGBs in the recruitment and development of sport coaches. In comparison to the UK's adult population (92% White and 8% BME), both studies stated that 99% of qualified head coaches and assistant coaches reported themselves to be White and 1% reported themselves to be BME (North, 2009; sports coach UK, 2011). The reports also stated that 82% of qualified coaches were men and 18% were women, in comparison to the UK's population of men (49%) and women (51%). This under-representation of Black coaches and managers has been at the forefront of many media headlines and political debates, particularly in relation to football (Bradbury et al., 2014; Sports People's Think Tank, 2014). For example, a headline in 2015 read: "Is football failing black managers? BBC Sport investigates". These debates have also taken place in the United States of America (USA), in which a recognition of unconscious bias has led to the implementation of 'The Rooney Rule', a policy that mandates that every National Football League (NFL) team must interview at least one Black candidate for head coaching positions or be subject to a financial fine (Collins, 2007).

The UK Coaching Framework, developed by scUK to provide a common vision and practical reference point to guide the development of UK coaching practice, states that a more diverse, inclusive and equitable coaching workforce are central strategic objectives (sports coach UK, 2012). Following the establishment of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)[iv], in 2007 and the single Equality Act, introduced initially in 2006 and then rewritten in 2010, equality is also now enforced as a public duty by law within UK publically funded sport organisations and NGBs. In addition, *The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport*, was launched in 2004 by UK Sport and the four Sport Councils, Sport

England, Sport Scotland, the Sports Council for Wales, and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland (Sports Council Equality Group, 2012). The purpose of this equality framework was to support NGBs to develop structures and processes to become more equitable in organisational and service development. Performance was assessed against four levels: foundation, preliminary, intermediate and advanced (Shaw, 2007; Sport England, 2004). As an impetus for NGBs to engage with this standard, key sport funding organisations (Sport England and UK Sport) set measureable targets linked to the achievement of the various levels of *The Equality Standard*. The mandatory requirement for sport organisations and NGBs to have equality legislation, in which 'race' and ethnicity must be addressed (Equality Act, 2010), has arguably strengthened the narrative of racial progress within UK sport organisations. However, the actual engagement of sport organisations and NGBs towards translating racial equality legislation and guidance into practice has been the subject of debate (Spracklen, Hylton, & Long, 2006). Shaw (2007, p. 426) has argued that by conceptualising a social justice aim such as equality as measureable and tangible, *The Equality Standard* "ignores the complex power and political relations that are inherent in considering the intersectionality of marginalised and under-represented groups". Specifically, it is argued that the audit-based approach focuses on equality *outcomes* rather than *processes* and as a result, sport organisations and NGBs may just pay lip service to required objectives without regard for the structures, cultures and processes by which outcomes can be achieved (Shaw, 2007; Spracklen et al., 2006).

Theorising 'race' and sport coaching: a CRT and Black feminism approach

A framework for this study informed by CRT and Black feminism was used to theorise how policy makers and coach educators frame the issues of 'race' and racial inequalities in sport coaching. We do not attempt to delineate the boundaries between CRT and Black feminism, rather we promote this combined framework to highlight the epistemologically

complementary ways that these perspectives interact. The principles centred in the framework for this research were: the centrality of 'race' and racism(s), challenging dominant ideologies of colour-blindness, objectivity, meritocracy, 'race-neutrality' and equal opportunity, and a commitment to social justice and transformation. Whilst accepting the constructed falsehood, and contested and problematic nature of 'race', this framework begins from the premise that 'race' and racism are common-place, endemic and enduring within society (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Though there is no scientific basis to the idea of 'race', we also recognise the lived realities of 'race' and by extension, this article begins from the premise that 'race' is a significant organising factor in sport coaching and that racialised processes are embedded within sport coaching discourses, structures, policies and practice. This centring of 'race' acknowledges the interconnection with other forms of subordination and oppression, such as gender, and therefore the notions of intersectionality and anti-essentialism are crucial (Author B, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This interlocking nature of oppression is a key ideological commitment in the work of CRT and Black feminism, as a significant factor shaping the subordination of marginalised groups is "their experience at the intersection of multiple structures of domination" (Collins, 1986: 20).

We attempt to confront the dominant ideologies and claims made by sport organisations towards meritocracy, equal opportunity, 'race-neutrality' and colour-blindness in sport policy and practice and challenge those institutional arrangements that racially discriminate and oppress to work towards social justice (Collins, 2000; Carter and Hawkins, 2011; Author B, 2012; Nebeker, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Discourses of meritocracy are often willingly accepted in sport because the success of athletes and coaches is widely perceived to be achieved on the basis of talent (Burdsey, 2011a; Author B, 2015; Hylton & Morpeth, 2012). Consequently leading to endorsements of sport as an unconstrained arena of colour-blindness and 'race' neutrality. Bonilla-Silva (2002; 2013) contends that colour-blind ideologies are controlled from positions of power that ignore racialised social processes and

disparities, and function to maintain the interests and privilege of dominant groups. He proposed four frames of colour-blind ideology used by White majority populations: abstract liberalism, naturalisation, cultural racism and minimisation of racism. Specifically, through the frame of abstract liberalism, for example justifying racial inequality on the basis that individuals have the right to choose whether or not to participate in mainstream settings as athletes and coaches, he shows how sport institutions can appear 'reasonable' whilst opposing any practical approaches to challenge racial disparities in sport (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Burdsey, 2011; Author B, 2009). Through the minimisation of racism frame, he illustrates how popular beliefs of racism being 'a thing of the past' leaves discriminatory practices unchallenged and actually serves to reinforce the status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Burdsey, 2014).

Where 'race' and racism have been debated in the sport literature, whiteness processes and privilege and racialised dynamics have been unexamined and under-theorised (Hylton, Pilkington, Warmington, & Housee, 2011). Thus, the mainstream writings of sport and leisure studies have traditionally and predominantly reflected the dominant epistemologies and knowledge interests of White social science (Author B, 2005; Bruening, 2005; Scraton, 2001; Spracklen et al., 2006). These writings have marginalised, or ignored the themes, ideas and perspectives that reflect Black experiences of sport, and have further omitted to examine the dominance and (in)visibility of whiteness within sport and within the research process (Author A, 2005). Massao and Fasting (2010) and Hylton (2010) argue that this omission to analyse the construction of whiteness and its related interactions in sport is based upon the explicit recognition of whiteness as normal and 'race-less'. Although the impact of Black feminism on sport research has been minimal, in other fields it has a long history of challenging dominant assumptions around the homogeneity and universalising of the Black experience and women's experiences (Brah, 1996; Carby, 1997; Collins, 1986; 2000; Mirza, 1997; 2009). In particular, the dominant racial and feminist discourses have been heavily

critiqued for disregarding the axes of white privilege and gender privilege, ignoring difference and diversity.

By explicitly recognising these social and structural processes, we work towards challenging sport coaching cultures and discourses to rethink 'race' and racial disparities (Carter & Hawkins, 2011; Collins, 2000, 2005; Author B, 2005; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As Delgado and Stefancic (2001, p. 3) write:

> CRT contains an activist dimension – It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organises itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better.

Blaisdell (2006) notes that CRT not only aims to change laws and rules but also to change the ideologies that result in racial inequality actions. Thus, activist scholars need to resist and challenge practitioners' and policy makers' dominant ideas which maintain racial inequalities in sport (Author B, 2009). For example, by raising awareness of whiteness and White privilege in sport, this research encourages sporting institutions to better recognise racialised inequalities in order to disrupt and challenge them. Applying this critical element of social transformation engages political ideas in order to influence and positively change mainstream sport coaching agendas where 'race' and other interconnecting oppressions are rarely centred. As noted, a central objective of scUK (2012), stated in the Coaching Framework, is a more diverse, inclusive and equitable coaching workforce. Therefore, it is expected that stakeholders will be working towards achieving equality within their organisations, programmes and for their coaches.

Methodology

This qualitative study involved thirteen semi-structured interviews with fifteen[v] staff leading on equality or coaching from three key UK national sport organisations (scUK, Sport Northern Ireland and UK Sport) and six NGBs. The sport organisations were selected based on their authority as key stakeholders with influence on, and as funders of, sport policy and practice in NGBs [see Table 1]. Sports coach UK, as the central UK coaching agency, works principally with NGBs in the recruitment and development of coaches. UK Sport represent an umbrella organisation that support and fund NGBs in the areas of coaching and high performance sport. The sport council, Sport Northern Ireland has a responsibility for supporting NGBs and is responsible for setting their targets to which funding is linked (Shaw, 2007). The participants purposively selected to be interviewed from the sport organisations and NGBs had one of either two roles. Role one involved promoting and implementing equality policy and strategy. These participants were selected based on their knowledge of, and authority to talk about, racial equality and diversity policies and practice within the organisation they represented. The second role involved implementing coach education and performance strategies and these participants were selected to be interviewed based on their authority to discuss racial equality and diversity in relation to the recruitment, education and retention of sport coaches within their organisation. The sport organisations agreed to use their real names and the participants representing these organisations have been named using their full titles. Table 1 profiles the participants that were interviewed from the three sport organisations.

[Insert Table 1 here]

The six NGBs, all based in England, were selected to ensure that the sample included a mixture of team and individual sports, sports associated with men, sports associated with women, and gender-balanced sports [see Table 2]. All six NGBs were working towards achieving *The Equality Standard* and therefore were expected to have an informed view on

how racial equality and diversity policies should be implemented. The NGBs have remained anonymous throughout this paper to ensure that the analysis and interpretation focuses on the key messages across the sport coaching landscape, rather than on specific sports. Anonymity was also necessary in order to create freedom for participants to be honest and open about their institutional approaches to and their personal experiences of racial equality and diversity. As such, each NGB was assigned a pseudonym and those participants working within the NGBs were assigned the respective pseudonyms of 'Equality Lead' or 'Coaching Lead' depending on their role. Table 2 profiles the participants interviewed from the six NGBs.

[Insert Table 2 here]

The interviews provided insight into the ideologies of the participants regarding 'race' and racial inequalities in sport coaching, and the approach and action taken towards racial equality and diversity policies and practice by their institution. A pre-planned interview guide was used to direct the interaction with the participants. This enabled us to attain important information relevant to the research questions whilst giving the participants the opportunity to explore their own views, feelings and experiences (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The method of thematic analysis was used to aid the identification, analysis and reporting of themes across the data set. Themes were coded using a predominantly inductive approach, however decisions regarding what text was and was not worthy of coding from the transcripts were made in relation to how participants framed the lack of racial diversity in sport coaching. NVivo10 was used to facilitate a more efficient and thorough procedure for data management, and analysis.

The failure to name whiteness has been noted by Scraton et al. (2005) who state that White research participants are rarely defined in relation to their 'race' and ethnicity and the knowledge produced from their experiences is often used to theorise a universal experience,

particularly for women (Bruening, 2005; Collins, 1986; 2000; Harris, 1990; hooks, 2015; Mirza, 2009, 1997). The sample of coaching and equality staff who contributed to this article were all 'White', and were predominantly women. Such groups of White women within sport have been critiqued for failing to "speak to, with, and for the diverse group of women" through a failure to understand and fully connect the interrelatedness of multiple oppressions that shape Black women's experiences, struggles and achievements (Brah, 1996; Bruening, 2005; Carby, 1997; Collins, 1986; 2000; Hargreaves, 2000; hooks, 1984, p. 14; Mirza, 2009, 1997).

The interviewer was Author A, who as a White, female, was arguably in a privileged position working within and researching predominantly White dominated institutions. As Woodward (2008, p. 537) acknowledges, these "embodied distinctions" carried by a researcher are all "constitutive elements in the research process". Due to the shared characteristic of whiteness with all of the participants interviewed, some participants may have felt more at ease and engaged in more openly difficult discussions regarding their feelings and experiences of racial inequality and diversity in the governance of sport coaching. Feagin (2013) refers to this as the White racial frame operating in the "back stage" due to the lack of social pressures to appear politically and socially correct. For example, one Coaching Lead expressed stereotypical views of Black delegates when discussing their attendance on coaching courses. Yet, most participants either omitted to engage in conversations or expressed anxiety regarding political correctness when discussing 'race' and ethnicity issues. Thus, sharing a characteristic of whiteness with these participants seemed to strengthen, not lessen Author A's role as a researcher engaging with racial equality and diversity.

Findings

The analysis and interpretation of the findings illustrate that key stakeholders in sport coaching employ colour-blind discourses. These endorsed a denial of 'race' as a salient factor underpinning racial inequalities and further served to rationalise such inequalities. The dominant ideologies employed are discussed below under three themes: equating diversity as inclusion, fore fronting meritocracy and individual agency, and framing whiteness. These three ideologies were evidenced in varying degrees across the sport organisations and NGBs and the participants' responses. For the purpose of this article and for clarity, our analysis addresses them as three separate themes in order to reflect the dominant perspectives held by the participants on 'race' and racial inequalities.

Diversity as inclusion

For some NGBs the participation of Black groups as participants and coaches was used as 'evidence' of racial equality and inclusivity in their sport which led them to deny racial inequalities within their coaching workforce (Burdsey, 2011b, 2014; Hoeber, 2007; Hoeber & Frisby, 2001; Hylton & Morpeth, 2012). The Equality Leads, from one of the larger NGBs that supported the development and management of an Olympic and Paralympic sport, expressed disappointment when explaining how the belief by many in the sport was that diversity in participation equated to inclusion. For them it meant that their NGB and sport did not deem it necessary to address 'race' or ethnicity issues. The Equality Leads were critical of this belief:

> *I think there's a sort of internal governance thing, and I think it exists*
> *because the sport has this perception, and it's true to an extent, it's the*
> *most inclusive sport because of the nature of the sport, they've got a very*
> *high Black population [of athletes], a big emphasis on disability, higher*
> *female participation and so […] in [sport] it's like, "we are fine, we've got*

some Black people [participating] for us, we don't need to worry about

that […] they think they don't need to do it (Equality Lead 1, GIE).

Within coaching, we do have a number of, particularly within the elite

athletes, we do have a number of BME coaches and on our local

coaching development programme we have a number of BME coaches

so I don't know whether the coaching team think it is an issue to be

honest (Equality Lead 2, GIE).

The Equality Lead for a NGB that governed a non-Olympic sport predominantly for women, similarly felt that her NGB posited the diversity within the British team as evidence of racial inclusion and equity:

I think you can look at the national team and say "Oh well, it's not all

White so it can't be that bad", but that doesn't really give you any real

understanding of what issues there are or aren't ... It was kind of well

we've got a policy and we've got the staff and we need to maintain that

level, not we need to do great works to progress from that level (Equality

Lead, PWS).

The PWS Equality Lead's concern regarding the lack of "real understanding" as to 'race' and ethnicity issues in sport coaching echoes the sentiments of Mirza (2009) and Burdsey (2011b, 2011c) who highlight that this numerical representation of Black participants and coaches does not represent a genuine and meaningful organisational culture that respects and promotes equality and diversity values. Burdsey (2011b, p. 265) states that "numerical representation by no means correlates with feelings of inclusion and belonging, or signifies the eradication of inequality and prejudice". In fact, the belief that racism is no longer a problem leaves discriminatory practices unchallenged in sport and serves to both reinforce

and justify the status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). As such, 'diversity', manifest in the form of uncritically presented numbers and statistics can actually conceal inequalities within institutions rather than exposing discriminatory social processes that result in inequalities and the under-representation of certain groups (Gillborn, 2010). Ahmed (2007, p. 243) further notes that having an "ideal image as 'being diverse'" can actually work to block any action that would implement equality and diversity initiatives by justifying that there is no need for such commitments. This was evidenced across the NGBs in that 'race' and ethnicity issues had been removed from discussion agendas regarding policy and practice (Burke, 2012; Hoeber, 2007). Burdsey (2011c, p. 7) argues that it is precisely this belief that 'race' and racism are no longer significant that allows the processes and practices of discrimination and inequality to function as they do – "in complex, nuanced and often covert ways". Though the diversity of participants was used to reproduce the discourse of racial progress within these sports coaching organisations (Burdsey, 2014), Equality Lead 2 for GIE, a NGB that had achieved the preliminary level of *The Equality Standard*, recalled that coach recruitment was still a process based on social networks and unconscious bias (Bradbury et al., 2014; Bridgewater, 2014):

> *Basically the people who go out to recruit coaches, they know who they are looking*
> *for to begin with and it's the same type of people that are being recruited over and*
> *over again (Equality Lead 2, GIE).*

It is reasonable to conclude then that the existing diverse image of participants and coaches within the sport and the belief that 'race' is irrelevant, has functioned to conceal a recognition of racial inequalities within some sport organisations and NGBs and this has prevented any action being directed towards racial equality and diversity.

Meritocracy and agency

In addition to endorsing a denial of racialised inequalities, a number of Equality and Coaching Leads provided a rationalisation for the lack of racial diversity in sport coaching. These responses were underpinned by colour-blind ideologies that emphasised liberal notions of meritocracy, individual choice and personal responsibility. They also positioned access to, and progression in, sport and coaching qualifications as open to all, a 'level-playing field' (Burdsey, 2011a; Author B, 2012). The Coaching Lead for a NGB that had achieved the preliminary level of *The Equality Standard* described the normative expectation and embedded belief within her NGB that all individuals, regardless of social background, could enter and progress as sport coaches:

> *I mean just about all schools play [sport] and everybody participates in*
> *[sport] and there's opportunities for everybody, so there's opportunities*
> *for everybody to enter at that bottom level and it's as they progress*
> *through that they start to get filtered out (Coaching Lead, PWS).*

The Equality Lead for another NGB that had also achieved the preliminary level shared a similar belief that also failed to acknowledge and address the impact of structural inequalities on coaching opportunities and experiences:

> *Our qualifications are open to anybody […] anyone can teach that has*
> *the capacity to understand safe and structured progressions […] there's*
> *no reason why you can't go right to the top level (Equality Lead, IDS).*

The Performance Systems Manager (coaching) at Sport Northern Ireland also stated:

> *It's [coach selection and development] purely on improved performance so it's on the*
> *athletes they work with. It doesn't discriminate against anybody in a sense […]*

Whether they are white or whatever they are, it's more to do with the broader

population of Northern Ireland] to be honest. There is nothing that's going to stop

anybody coming on, it's the opportunity they have further back down the line and how

they get engaged with the sport in the first place.

A superficial reading of these statements suggests an open and equitable coaching system in which everybody has the opportunity to participate and progress as a coach (Burdsey, 2011a). Yet, Gillborn (2008, p. 30) argues that "these notions, despite their apparent concern for equity and justice, currently operate as a mechanism by which particular groups are excluded from the mainstream". Here again we see Bonilla-Silva's (2010) minimisation of racism frame operating as an ideology, in that those individuals in positions of authority dispute the salience of racialised dynamics and discrimination as a factor in explaining the under-representation of Black coaches. In particular, participants stressed that progression within coaching was achieved on the basis of talent and was dependent on an individual's ability, commitment and motivation (Burdsey, 2011a). One Coaching Lead (GIE) noted that it was "*only the really motivated and driven ones*" that would go on to higher levels of coaching. When asked about the progression of Black men and women in coaching, other participants responded with similar arguments:

They'll be able to progress through our coaching levels at the same rate

as anybody else […] as long as they can show they are competent at that

level […] and capable (Equality Lead, IDS).

Those opportunities are available to everybody providing they can

commit to it and they've got the right skill level and everything else

(Coaching Lead, PWS).

The onus on the individual to 'possess' the correct motivation, drive and competency to engage and progress further represents an organisational disengagement from the reality of intersecting racialised and gendered barriers facing aspiring and active Black male and female coaches. The employment of the cultural racism frame (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), in which the coaches who have not progressed through the coaching levels are universally seen to lack motivation, drive or competency ultimately operates to justify the exclusion of certain groups whilst simultaneously defending and reinforcing privileges in a hierarchy that advantages White coaches, and specifically White male coaches (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Burdsey, 2011a; Gillborn, 2008).

The analysis demonstrates that colour-blind narratives were further underpinned by Bonilla-Silva's (2010, 2013) frame of abstract liberalism in that the under-representation of Black coaches was rationalised as a matter of either "*their*" [Black individuals] unwillingness to engage in sport coaching or "*their*" inability to perform as sport coaches. The increasing emphasis on self-determination, and individualism are broader symptoms of the proliferation of neoliberalism in public discourses. Goldberg's (2015) description of a post-racial condition is typified by the Coaching and Equality Leads' turns to individual choice and market forces meeting the needs and requirements of a pluralist society. What is sometimes lost in such 'level playing field' approaches is a recognition of historical inequalities, resource dependencies with the under-served, and the need to underpin policies and practices with explicit concerns for 'race' and social justice. The following quote indicates the continued belief that all aspiring coaches and tutors have the same access to opportunities, and their uptake of these opportunities is dependent on individual choice:

> *We get a bit of heat and grief in terms of we don't have representative Black*
> *and ethnic minority tutors to deliver our courses so sending in a White*
> *middle class male tutor makes it un-relatable to the coaching community,*

which on the one hand I can see but on the other hand whenever we've

advertised we don't have people with that background applying to become

tutors, so it's like how do you attract those people to role model what you

are moving forward, do you know what I mean? (Coaching Lead, GIE).

By justifying the inequalities as a matter of "*their*" unwillingness, the sport organisations and NGBs not only depict Black groups as the problem but also dissociate any responsibility for the construction and maintenance of racial inequalities and exclusion (Burdsey, 2007; Norman et al., 2014). Ultimately, this focus on individual agency of minority groups serves to reinforce the hegemonic power relations that privilege whiteness and maleness within sport coaching and deflects attention away from possible systemic racialised and sexist discrimination. The 'problem' of the whiteness in sport coaching was thus reinscribed not as an institutional problem for the NGB, but as a problem with those not included by it (Ahmed, 2012; Goldberg, 2015).

Framing whiteness

Because diversity has been taken to mean "the inclusion of people who look different" (Puwar, 2004, p. 1) and is hence something that is seen to "be embodied by others", the whiteness within the sport organisations, NGBs and sport coaching was masked (Ahmed & Swan, 2006, p. 98); it had become the invisible norm (Author B, 2009; Massao & Fasting, 2010). The Coaching and Equality Leads themselves represented varying abilities to recognise the dominance of whiteness in their organisations. For example, the dominance of whiteness within sport coaching was much more readily voiced by the Equality Leads in Team Sport (TS) and Grouped Individual Events (GIE):

When we had a staff day, at one point, there was only one Black member of staff out of a hundred and whatever it was; visually it was obvious that we weren't recruiting BME staff (Equality Lead, TS).

We are based in one of the most Asian communities probably in [location], in the country as well, and yet if you look at staff, if you look at elite athletes, probably if you look at [sport] clubs round here there's not an Asian presence at all and you can't really use the sort of biological racism to justify that, it's a cultural thing and it's a barrier you have to break (Equality Lead 1, GIE).

The Leadership and Coaching Development Manager at UK Sport also stated:

I think if you were to look across our organisation I think we are hugely symptomatic of the projection of what elite sport is in the UK. This is a very heavy dominated kind of White environment that we are in and I think you only see diversity within the gender strand typically across the organisation and I don't think we are hugely diverse.

As Puwar (2004) also found in relation to the elite White spaces of the UK Parliament, the condition of colour-blindness across all the sport organisations and NGBs was much more extensive than gender-blindness. In other words, the gendered identity of the coaching workforce was more likely to be recognised than their racialised identity. As a Development Lead Officer at sports coach UK, explained:

There's certainly a greater focus on women and girls […] Sport England are kind of pushing women and girls and disability but not necessarily the BME side of things.

A number of Equality and Coaching Leads could not see the dominance of whiteness within

their institution. The denial and / or irrelevance of 'race' as an intersecting factor in accessing and progressing in sport coaching (Lusted, 2009) is illustrated in the following statement from a Coaching Lead from a NGB who governed a sport dominated by women:

> *I've never really, umm, perceived it* [racial equality & diversity] *as being an issue, or that we don't have a diverse group of coaches or that we discriminate in any way or that the same opportunities aren't available to everybody. I think the barriers that would prevent people from progressing in their coaching apply to everybody regardless of their background, so whether that's cost or you know, time commitments or whatever else I don't think they are specific to any particular group (Coaching Lead, PWS).*

Goldberg (2015) would argue that at the same time as recognising 'race' and therefore the related disadvantages, this coaching lead is choosing to ignore them and reinforce these differences. Decisions made by racially privileged coaching leads demonstrate a lack of appreciation of the systematic inequalities and intersecting challenges that may impact upon aspiring coaches from different social backgrounds. It illustrates that whiteness, and the power it is privileged by, was largely invisible to this Coaching Lead and the institution she represented. As written by McIntosh (1997), men tend not to see their gender privilege and White people tend not to see their 'race' privilege. hooks (2015) cautions that this lack of awareness of White supremacy as a racial politic, from White women, who possess authority in decision-making positions, can further marginalise Black coaches. This is particularly the case when gender equality initiatives are premised on the misplaced assumption that all women are united by a shared identity and a shared oppression (Carby, 1997; hooks, 2015). This lack of awareness was noted by the Development Lead Officer for Equality at sport coach UK to be common in coaching departments:

I don't think it's on people's radar because I think they just see people as people, they see participants as participants, they don't recognise that there are potential barriers for those groups.

Acker (2009) argues that efforts to achieve equality within organisations are often obstructed by this invisibility, or lack of awareness, of systematic and interconnecting inequalities. This insistence on "treating all persons alike, regardless of their differing initial positions and histories" (Delgado, 2011, p. 1247) is argued to emanate from a position of power and privilege that situates whiteness as the norm. Goldberg (2015) would describe this awareness of the racial while being blind to it as a 'perverse double consciousness'. This was evidenced during the interviews in which a number of participants either omitted to mention 'race' and ethnicity when discussing the equality characteristics and under-represented groups within their organisation or expressed a degree of anxiety when discussing 'race' and ethnicity issues. In support of other writers who have adopted whiteness critiques as frameworks for researching racialisation in sport (e.g. Author B, 2009; Hylton and Lawrence, 2015; King, 2004; 2007; Long and Hylton, 2002; Watson and Scraton, 2001), this discomfort when discussing issues of 'race' and ethnicity illustrated that whiteness, and the power it privileges, was largely invisible to the participants and the institutions they represented. Crucially, the lack of diversity and visibility of whiteness within coaching was noted by 'other' athletes and coaches, as the Equality Lead for TS explained:

When we did the research with young Asian Muslims they were saying that basically they think of sports clubs as being white only spaces. […] So we've got to work with those groups to challenge the barrier that actually it isn't, it doesn't have to remain a white only space, they would be welcome, they would be encouraged, they would be, you know, it is important that we recruit people into the organisation.

Therefore, those who do not appreciate the significance of 'race' are unlikely to notice racial

discrimination or a lack of diversity (Wise, 2008). As King (2001, p. 19) states, the dominance of White men within the professional culture of sport means that they do not have to "acknowledge the privileges of being White men and, as a result the issue of 'race' [and arguably gender] is simply deemed irrelevant". Consequently, this "colour-blind package of racial understandings", in which 'race' is either not "seen" or regarded as relevant allows social structures to be viewed as equitable and impartial in their day-to-day functioning, ultimately masking any processes of exclusion (Doane, 2003, p. 12).

Concluding thoughts and implications

The focus of this article has been to critically examine how sport organisations and NGBs frame 'race' and racial inequalities in sport coaching. In doing so, we have built upon existing coaching sociology literature that has critiqued and sought to qualitatively understand socially constructed relations within coaching, such as gender and sexual orientation (for example see Author C, 2012a; 2012b). We have revealed processes and practices of whiteness within sport coaching institutions that sustain racial (in)equalities, and specifically serve to ignore the dearth of Black coaches. Therefore, this article not only progresses our understanding of the current status of racial equality within sport organisations and NGBs, but it also reaffirms the importance of understanding the social and institutional context in which policies are produced and implemented. By presenting an alternative epistemological perspective and methodological approach to the mainstream sport coaching research, this article has demonstrated the strengths of a CRT and Black feminism approach to name, understand and challenge the dominant ideologies within social institutions that commonly ignore or marginalise the salience of 'race'. In this paper CRT and Black feminism enabled a sharper focus on ideologies and practices that Mirza would describe as 'blind spots' to 'race' and gender in particular. The nature of oppression was questioned here as 'race', gender and their intersections were salient at different times. Black feminists in particular would

argue that social justice agendas do not benefit all women equally and we saw how even other [White] women over simplified the nature of these oppressions. In sum, CRT and Black feminism engendered an oppositional politics where oppressive racialised forces reign. The necessity for this critical lens becomes apparent in any concerted critique of dominant epistemologies and approaches to inclusive practice in sport coaching. The methodological centralisation of 'race', racism, and whiteness ensures that these phenomena are made visible within sport coaching.

Our findings illustrate that three dominant colour-blind ideologies are employed in stakeholder discourses when discussing 'race' and racial inequalities in sport coaching: equating diversity as inclusion, forefronting meritocracy and individual agency, and framing whiteness. These ideologies are argued to sustain the institutional racialised processes and formations within the governing administrative structures in sport organisations and NGBs that serve to normalise and privilege White people in sport coaching, whilst deeming 'race' and ethnicity concerns as insignificant. The diversity of the sample in terms of whiteness is instructive as an indicator of the lack of racial diversity in the governance of sport coaching. With all 16 participants across the sport organisations and NGBs seemingly lacking the first hand insight and experience of minoritised ethnicity, authors such as Ahmed (2012) and King (2004) would argue that this workforce is weakened by its similitude. The concern, as highlighted by Burdsey (2007), and illustrated here, is that this reluctance to acknowledge racial inequalities and the denial, or rationalisation of its existence through the maintenance of colour-blind ideologies means that organisations and NGBs are less likely to recognise or challenge racism. This poses a fundamental challenge for working toward equality and social justice in sport coaching because the ideological and political framing of 'race', racial equality and whiteness adopted by a NGB directly impacts upon their approach to racial inequality, policy development and implementation (Author A, 2015). As illustrated, when NGBs think of themselves as diverse, meritocratic and neutral, it is extremely difficult to challenge and change the deeply engrained norms and standards based on a specific White masculine,

coaching culture. Therefore, sport coaching is maintained as a predominantly White institution as a result of the dominant networks, knowledge, attitudes and ideologies that have become the unquestioned norms and standards from which 'other' racial and ethnic groups are judged (Author B, 2009; King, 2004; Long & Hylton, 2002; Singer, 2005).

In making visible these institutional processes, sport organisations and NGBs are better positioned to recognise and challenge racial inequalities. This should disrupt power structures that promote the interests of whiteness and oppress those considered an 'other' to the White norm (Burdsey, 2007; Puwar, 2004). Thus, the failure of policy makers and governing bodies in prioritising racial and racialised gender equality and diversity can be partially attributed to the lack of understanding in sport as to the dominance of whiteness (Hylton & Lawrence, 2015; Hylton & Morpeth, 2012; Long & Hylton, 2002) and the marginalisation of the Black experience. It is only through this acknowledgement and naming that whiteness can be displaced from its central, unmarked and undefined position (Frankenberg, 1993; Puwar, 2004). In speaking about the UK educational context, Gillborn (2008b) challenges those individuals and institutions who believe 'race' issues to be a peripheral matter and an issue that is gradually improving with incremental policy improvements. He argues that racial equality should and needs to be "placed centre-stage as a fundamental axis of oppression" within research, policy and practice (Gillborn, 2008b, p.1). We argue that 'race' and racial equality need also to be centred within sport and sport coaching research, policy and practice. It is imperative that in order to inform racial equality policy and practice, and ensure the development of holistic coach programmes, sport organisations and NGBs have a clearer understanding as to the nature of racialised power relations and institutional processes.

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[i] There are a wide range of perspectives on how the term 'diversity' is being used within UK employment practices but increasingly, diversity is used with the term 'equality' (Ahmed and Swan, 2006). In policy terms, Puwar (2004) notes that 'diversity' has meant the inclusion of different bodies. The term has been critiqued by scholars who argue that it individuates difference, conceal inequalities and neutralises histories of antagonism and struggle (Ahmed and Swan, 2006; Ahmed, 2007; Puwar, 2004).

[ii] BME (Black and Minoritised Ethnic) is a popular acronym used in policy circles in the UK, used to denote the diverse positions and identities of all those individuals classed as 'in the minority'.

[iii] There has been some agreement by critical 'race' researchers and black feminists in the UK that the term 'Black', as a political term, is a meaningful act of identification for individuals that marks a collective presence against challenges of racism and marginalisation. We use the term 'Black' as an inclusive and political term.

iv The EHRC effectively merged the three institutionally separate equality commissions, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), and instead took a combined responsibility approach for 'race', disability and sex, as well as other equality strands.

v Two of the interviews were carried out with two members of staff together (the Equality Lead and the Coaching Lead from UK sport and scUK).