Cracking the glass ceiling? Representation and the experiences of elite level ethnic minority coaches in football in Europe

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The running order

1. The wider context: professional football and 'race'

2. The research context: the study and methods

3. The research findings: levels of representation

4. The research findings: explaining under-representation

5. The academic context: some final comments

Popular myths

- Football as a post racial, meritocratic, egalitarian space where 'race' doesn't matter?

o Increased 'super-diversity' of players in elite leagues

o Opportunities for social mobility/economic reward

o Opportunities untainted by racism/discrimination

o Where racism exists it is 'out there' not 'in there'

o Failure to progress perceived in terms of personal deficit rather than institutional shortcomings

Critical realities

- Development, organisation, and practice of professional football a 'racial formation': racialised power relations and racial meanings

- Overt, culturally coded and institutional racisms impinge upon and are generated through its practice and encounters

- Skewed patterns of representation in football: lack of throughput from playing to coaching and leadership: 'super diversity' and 'glass ceilings'

2. About the study and methods

Findings from wider study examining diversity in pro-football in Europe

1. Establish an empirical marker for the levels of representation of women and ethnic minorities in coaching and leadership positions
   o Statistical review of UEFA, FA's, elite level professional leagues/clubs

2. Identify key factors enabling or constraining the career progression of ethnic minorities across the transition from players into coaching
   o Semi-structured interviews with elite level ethnic minority coaches in England, France, Netherlands (n=40)

Focus of this study to summarise these findings in relation to:
   o Levels of representation (statistical review)
   o Explaining under-representation (interview data)
   o Institutional discrimination and hegemonic whiteness (academic context)

3. Levels of representation

Quantitative findings indicate mixed levels of representation of ethnic minorities in pro-football in England, France, and Netherlands, e.g.,

- ➢ National populations =   12-15% EM
- ➢ Professional club players =   25-30% EM
- ➢ Professional club coaches =   2-4% EM
- ➢ Senior administration/governance = 1% EM

- Over-representation of (some) EM populations as players

- Lack of throughput from playing into coaching (and leadership) positions

- Low levels of representation across club coaching infrastructure
  - e.g., 19/552 (3.4%) of senior coaches at English clubs from EM backgrounds

- Ethnic minorities: 'fit for doing' but not 'fit for organising' football

4. Explaining under-representation

Interviews with elite level ethnic minority coaches highlighted a number of key constraining factors to career progression:

A. Limited access to and negative experiences of high level coach education
- 'They don't want you there, they don't care what you think'

B. Over-reliance on networks based methods of coach recruitment
- 'It's not what you know, it's who you know'

C. Experiences of racisms and stereotypes in the coaching workplace
- 'It's not what you know, its who they think you are'

D. Lack of BME coach role models and continued under-representation
- 'Why bother playing the game, if the result is fixed'

(A). Limited access to - negative experiences of - high level coach education

- Not in employment at clubs and outside 'insider' football networks
  - Limited opportunities for identification, mentoring, financial support

- Marginalised within culturally narrow club coaching environments
  - Overlooked for selection in favour of 'preferred' white candidates

- Perceived favouritism to White ex players by FA coach educators
  - Less value, pressure in building confidence, competence, acceptance

- Intentional/unintentional racism from coach educators and ex-players
  - Heightened cultural isolation, lessened aspirations towards qualifications

- Slowed pace of progression, playing catch up in achieving qualifications
  - Competitive disadvantage (against Whites) in coaching market-place

'I'm thinking, I'm not invisible, I am here you know'

(B). Over-reliance on networks based methods of coach recruitment

- Limited operation of qualifications framework for coach recruitment
  o Limited chances for qualified EM coaches versus less qualified white coaches

- Coach recruitment from within 'White' social/cultural insider networks
  o Evidenced through frequency of White coaches moving from club to club

- Lack of EM captains as players, marginal to captain to coach pathways
  o Limited chances to exhibit leadership, build relationships with power brokers

- Unconscious racial bias of sports media, appointments in 'White' terms
  o Assumed merits of White coaches, EM coaches absent from narratives

- EM coaches in 'catch 22' situation re: experience
  o Lacking club experience but denied opportunities to gain experience at clubs

'They choose people who look and act like them, who they know'

(C). Experiences of racisms and stereotypes in the coaching workplace

- Continued existence of subtle, nuanced, codified racism/discrimination

    o Inappropriate language to describe different cultural groups
    o Questioning competence of EM coaches, not applied to White coaches
    o Denying EM coaches promotion opportunities within club infrastructures

- Continued existence of physical/cultural stereotypes by power brokers

    o Misplaced assumptions re: aspirations, attitudes, behaviours, intellect
    o Questioning suitability, authority, competence to coach teams
    o Perceived racial/ethnic traits over qualifications, experiences, abilities
    o EM coaches perceived risk/uncertainty, White coaches familiarity/comfort

'The black coach is always a black coach. A white coach is just a coach'

Under-representation and institutional discrimination

- The normative everyday 'taken for granted' practices of networks based recruitment to coaching positions in football has (and continues) favour White candidates and gravitate against the employment of EM coaches

- The application of negative conceptualisations of EM coaches on the basis of ethnicity (the perceived racial self) over their qualifications, experiences, abilities (the ignored professional self) has positioned EM coaches disadvantageously in football coaching labour markets

- These processes and practices of conscious and unconscious racial bias constitute a form of institutional discrimination which has clear negative impacts in limiting potential for equality of opportunities and outcomes

Institutional discrimination and hegemonic whiteness

- Processes/practices of institutional discrimination underpinned by the 'invisible centrality of whiteness' in senior organisational tiers of football

  o Maintains white privilege and advantage as the cultural norm, precludes recognition of beneficial membership of social/cultural networks

  o Maintains key power brokers position as 'inside' and included' and EM as 'outside' and excluded' from key decision making positions

  o Maintains racial inequalities to be effortlessly reproduced/perpetuated, dominant White hegemonic structures remain unchallenged/unchanged

- Establishing equality? Need to challenge, disrupt, dismantle racialised power relations embedded within organisational make-up of the sport

Thank-you for listening

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Summary research findings available at:
http://www.farenet.org/news/europe-wide-report-shows-ethnic-minorities-and-women-marginal-in-leadership-and-coaching-jobs-in-football/

Forthcoming articles in 2015/2016 (presently 'in process')