

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE HIRING PRACTICES
OF AN OLYMPIC-LEVEL SPORT
ORGANIZATION: A CASE STUDY**

A Dissertation Presented for the
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Degree
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ABSTRACT

Supported by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) is responsible for National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and High-Performance Management Organizations (HPMOs) in the United States. NGBs and HPMOs are Olympic-level sport organizations representing individual Olympic sports, consisting of various stakeholders, including staff, members, coaches, athletes, boards of directors, and additional committees. Mandated by the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Act (1978), every four years, the USOPC collects demographic data and produces scorecards for each organization detailing the makeup of their membership, athletes, coaches, board of directors, standing committees, and professional staff (USOPC, 2021). Considering professional staff, scorecard data from 2013-20 reveals a challenge for many Olympic-level sport organizations, fostering a racially diverse staff. In response, the current study explores the hiring practices of an Olympic-level sport organization to learn about the ways in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity.

To illuminate the problem, Chapter 1 provides background on racial inequity in sport, the Olympic movement and the current study's contribution to the literature. Chapter 2 reviews literature from various disciplines such as human resource management, sociology, and sport management. Additionally, the suitability of Giddens' (1984) Structuration Theory and Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations to theoretically buttress the current study is identified and expounded upon. The study's guiding research questions are 'How does an Olympic-level sport organization

conceptualize and describe its hiring practices?’, and ‘In what ways do organizational members perceive race as being relevant in hiring practices?’

Chapter 3 outlines the study’s qualitative case study methodology and the methods employed. Chapter 4 reports the findings including “*Moving Target*”, *A Proclivity Toward “Familiar” Professional Networks, Unstructured, Variability & Subjectivity, The Salience and Variability of “Fit”, and The Irrelevance of Race in Hiring*. Drawing from these findings, Chapter 5 includes a discussion detailing (a) the ways the case operates as a *racialized organization* fundamental in constructing racial inequity by facilitating a *racialized hiring process*, and (b) how the organizational members and hiring practices are dually responsible for (re)producing racial inequity over time.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Supported by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) is responsible for National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and High-Performance Management Organizations (HPMOs) in the United States. NGBs and HPMOs are non-profit member organizations representing individual Olympic sports (e.g., USA Swimming, USA Basketball, USA Fencing), consisting of various stakeholders, including staff, members, coaches, athletes, boards of directors, and additional committees (USOPC, 2021). Of principal importance to these organizations are the athletes and staff as they work symbiotically to achieve organizational goals. Specifically, the professional staff is responsible for carrying out internal operations, including nominating qualified athletes to the Olympic team.

Throughout the USOPC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) website, statements, programming, and initiatives are oriented toward fostering diversity through their *athletes* and *the workforce, athletic performance* and *business results* (USOPC, 2021). In fact, workforce diversity is presented as a priority in an effort to support their multicultural athlete representation. Coinciding with this goal, the USOPC explicitly states they have “taken definitive steps to diversify its workforce” (USOPC, 2021). In turn, many of their DEI programming and initiatives are intended to “provide access and opportunities” to “communities of color, the LGBTQ community, people with disabilities and those of all genders and gender identities” (USOPC, 2021). However, demographic data reveals that people of color have been consistently underrepresented as many of

these organizations' professional staff remain disproportionately (83%) White (USOPC, 2021).

Throughout the USOPC landscape, fostering a racially diverse staff is presented as a current challenge, meriting further inquiry. Further, within the Olympic movement, navigating race-related matters is endemic, with a comprehensive history of racism, discrimination, and bias. To provide context for the USOPC's modern racial diversity challenge, Chapter 1 provides (a) a historical overview of discrimination throughout the Olympic Movement, (b) a demographic analysis of the USOPC's professional staff in efforts to introduce the purpose of this study, (c) a summary of relevant literature to illuminate the problem, and (d) the conceptual, methodological, epistemological, and theoretical direction of this dissertation.

Background: A Historical Overview of the Olympic Movement & Race

With one of the eldest sport traditions tracing to ancient Greece, sport was conceived through a biased lens, restricting participation to a specific gender, social class, and culture. For example, sport in ancient Greece was developed as a life-death event for men to demonstrate their virtues (Kretchmar et al., 2018). Because sport was fundamental to the development of men, sacral sporting events were created to serve as a “culturally unifying bond” (Kretchmar et al., 2018, p.70) to their homeland. Emerging from the Panhellenic Athletic System in Greece, the Olympic Games were established in 776 BCE as an elite sport competition, occurring every four years at Olympia, for men to compete and honor their god Zeus (Kretchmar et al., 2018). Since its inception, the Olympic culture has been discriminative as particular social groups were inherently excluded from

participation and observation. For instance, participation was reserved for the socially acceptable Greek male with no criminal record, and women were excluded through a penal death law forbidding them to enter sport facilities (Kretchmar et al., 2018). This discriminative Greek culture of the Olympic Games proliferated throughout ancient Greek sport culture, serving as the foundation for sports.

Despite the ancient Olympic Games ending in 394 CE/393 AD, the leader credited for reviving the Olympics, Pierre Baron de Coubertin, embedded discriminative practices into the modern games, resulting in various forms of marginalization and exclusion. Later identified as a man lacking a “moral compass to equality” (Boykoff, 2016, p.17), Coubertin’s biased personal values regarding gender, social class and race shaped the shared values and foundation of the modern Olympic Games. With respect to race, racial ideology heavily influenced the experiences of people of color within the Olympic Movement.

Coubertin’s thoughts on race aligned with the overarching ideology of the 1900s, describing people of color as “savages” and the “lower race” and White people as “civilized” and the “superior race” (Boykoff, 2016, p.18). These descriptors of racial groups reflect the very essence of racism – the belief that one’s racial group is inherently superior to other racial groups – which heavily affects the access and opportunities of people of color (Brennan, 2017). Furthermore, Coubertin applied racist ideology to sport as he believed “civilized sport” could be used to “calm Africa down” (Boykoff, 2016, p.19). These racist beliefs influenced Olympic sport as people of color were included in Olympic sport due to Coubertin’s hedonistic goal of revolutionizing the Olympics

through expansion and progression (Boykoff, 2016). Ultimately, Coubertin's belief system curated a racially discriminative foundation for the modern Olympics. In fact, racist ideology persisted throughout the evolution of the Olympic movement in the 1900s.

Held in Los Angeles, the 1932 Olympic games were challenging for many Black American athletes due to the prominent societal racial ideology (e.g., Jim Crow Laws), in which they experienced marginalization, mistreatment, and exclusion (Weisbord, 2015). For instance, leading up to the games, some Black athletes were marginalized in qualifiers and lacked financial support (Weisbord, 2015). Moreover, during the games, inequality shone through track athlete Thomas Eddie Tolan's 200m competition, whose lane was "mismeasured" (Weisbord, 2015, p.5), causing him to run additional meters.

Similarly, the 1936 games in Berlin are known as the "most controversial Olympic games" (Guttman, 2002, p.53) due to their location and presiding ideology. Germany's chancellor and Nazi party leader, Adolf Hitler, perpetuated racist ideology to exclude certain cultural groups from competition. Specifically, as the governmental leader of the host country, Hitler's primary intention was to perpetuate Nazi ideology and exclude Blacks and Jews from participation, reserving the Olympic games for the White race (Guttmann, 2002; Weisbord, 2015). Throughout this resistance, German Jews experienced a lack of access to private clubs and unequal treatment throughout the Olympic trials, leading to token Jews making the final team composition (Guttman, 2002). This tokenism served as a mechanism to obscure the ongoing oppression toward Jews in Germany. Considering the presiding ideology over Germany, additional athletes

identifying within the African and Jewish diaspora battled a personal dilemma regarding their decision to participate as a qualified athlete or protest in the name of social justice. As the overarching body governing the Olympic games, the IOC vacillated between changing the location, and ultimately voted to keep the games in Berlin (Guttmann, 2002). In response, some countries and athletes independently pushed for a boycott. Thus, despite previous instances in which race, politics, and sports intersected, these 1936 Olympic Games is one of the most notable international sporting events demonstrating this convergence, which reached its apex during the 1968 Olympic Games.

Given the plight of race relations in the United States during the 1960s, The Olympic Project for Human Rights organized a potential Olympic boycott led by Dr. Harry Edwards and elite Black American athletes including Tommie Smith, Juan Carlos, Jim Brown, Arthur Ashe, Jackie Robinson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and others (Boykoff, 2016). This boycott emerged due to the belief that America was using sport to project an international lie regarding race relations in the United States, as there were many acts of racism underlying American society and the Olympic movement during that time (Edwards, 1979). Specifically, the OPHR organized and mobilized to illuminate six issues requiring attention, including (1) restore Muhammad Ali's title, (2) remove Avery Brundage as the president of the IOC, (3) hire more African-American coaches to Olympic teams, (4) appoint African-Americans to policy-making positions in the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), (5) mandate the desegregation of the New York athletic club, (6) and disinvite Rhodesia and South Africa to the games due to their apartheid rulership (Boykoff, 2016). The authoritative response to this boycott was

disheartening as IOC president Avery Brundage was appalled, “The Olympic Games have given the negro an opportunity to display his talents on a completely equal basis, and it is outrageous that they should be used for political purposes” (Boykoff, 2016, p.105). However, in response to the mere threat of Black athletes not competing in these games, the Olympic movement conceded through fulfilling some demands, including South Africa and Rhodesia being banned from the games, and more black coaches being hired. Despite the OPHR boycott discontinuing, the fight for social justice persisted throughout these games, with founding OPHR members Tommie Smith and John Carlos causing further controversy.

Smith and Carlos finished 1st and 3rd in the 200m track competition, and during the award ceremony, they drew awareness toward the injustices of Black people in America by each raising a fist, immersed in a black glove, signifying a black power salute (Weisbord, 2015). In response, the IOC and USOC viewed this as unpatriotic and divisive and issued various penalties, including immediate dismissal from the Olympic Village and exclusion from the official archived film of the games (Boykoff, 2016).

Since 1968, racism within the Olympic movement has been apparent through discriminatory policies, with racialized effects still affecting Olympians today. Aligning with the historical objectification of Black women’s bodies, the enactment of sex testing in the Olympics centered around Eurocentric conceptualizations of femininity has historically disproportionately targeted female athletes of the African diaspora (Batelaan & Abdel-Shehid, 2021; Collins, 2000; Oly, 2020). Specifically, prominent track athletes of color, including Caster Semenya and 2020 Olympians Christine Mbomba and Beatrice

Masilingi have been publicly scrutinized and prohibited from Olympic competition for having naturally high testosterone levels and hyperandrogenism, a condition causing high levels of androgen (Batelaan & Abdel-Shehid, 2021; Chavez, 2021; Pape, 2020). Another policy targeting Black women is the swim cap ban facilitated by the International Swimming Federation, forbidding the use of “soul caps” at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, which are uniquely designed to accommodate the hair of Black women (Brown, 2021).

Further, *Rule 50* of the Olympic Charter demonstrates the IOC’s intolerance of political and *racial* propaganda and demonstrations (kneeling, gestures, articles of clothing) (Elsborg, 2020). Within this policy, athletes and officials are prohibited from expressing political, *racial*, or religious demonstrations throughout the Olympic Games (Elsborg, 2021). Subsequent violation of Rule 50 results in “disciplinary proceedings” on a case-by-case basis (Olympics, 2021).

As racism permeates through the fabric of America, these historic and contemporary examples reveal the ways racism has been operationalized throughout the Olympic movement. Modern-day racism in America continues through acts of racialized violence (e.g., George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, U.S. Capital coup, etc.) and racist policies (e.g., Georgia voting laws) (Russell-Brown, 2021; Woods, 2021). Because sport is a microcosm of society, racism in sport is revealed through the glaring lack of African Americans positioned in leadership positions (e.g., head coaches, managers), and discriminative policies and procedures (e.g., racial bias in NFL concussions claims, the International Swimming Federation forbidding the use of swim caps designed for Afro hair during the 2020 Olympics) (Belson, 2020; Kochi, 2021; TIDES, 2021). Regarding

the Olympic movement, literature and demographic data assert, racism covertly persists through the workplace.

Background: Racial Inequity in Sport Organizations

In the 21st century, the sport industry has given increased attention to issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) primarily due to impending demographic shifts and societal pressures (e.g., racialized violence) (Cunningham, 2019). Particularly, the United States is experiencing a demographic change in which more women are entering the workforce, and the ongoing racial minority-majority shift (i.e., racial and ethnic minorities will become the majority by 2045), which heavily impacts sport organizations (Cunningham, 2019; Vespa et al., 2018). In reference to public pressures, sport organizations have historically been instrumental in responding to significant social issues (e.g., race relations) and most recently active regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter activism, and the attempted insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. In response, sport organizations have sought to demonstrate a *normative* – obligatory – commitment to DEI through statements, programming, and policies (Cunningham, 2008). However, this commitment to DEI is often not demonstrated through organizational practices (e.g., hiring practices, advancement opportunities), as many sport organizations remain disproportionately racially homogenous, including many Olympic-level sport organizations.

Major sporting leagues, governing bodies, and organizations (e.g., NFL, USA Equestrian) are overrepresented by White men in leadership positions, resulting in the marginalization and exclusion of racial minorities (and women) across organizational

landscapes (Vianden & Gregg, 2017; TIDES, 2021). The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES) is a research-based entity that annually produces reports detailing the racial (and gender) composition of athletes, coaches, and other professional staff within the NBA, WNBA, NFL, MLB, MLS, and college sport. Based on the most recent report (2020), people of color held less than 20% of executive positions (e.g., CEO, president, general manager, vice president) and senior leadership positions (e.g., directors, senior managers, and administrators, etc.), and less than 25% of professional staff positions (e.g., managers, assistant directors, supervisors, coordinators, etc.) across the NFL, MLB, and MLS (TIDES, 2020, 2021). In addition, despite the NBA and WNBA demonstrating racial diversity at a higher rate in leadership (35%) and professional staff positions (36%), these organizations' executive and professional staff remain disproportionately White, which is striking considering the majority Black makeup of the athletes in these leagues.

According to demographic data, the White race is represented in many U.S.-based sport organizations at a higher proportion than in the United States population (Hylton, 2018; Volz, 2013). This struggle to hire and retain a racially diverse staff has become institutionalized as data and scholarship suggest racially inequitable factors exist on individual, organizational, and societal levels (Cooper et al., 2017; Cunningham & Sagas, 2004; Cunningham, 2019, 2020). Thus, it is the responsibility of sport scholars to investigate sport entities to learn about the mechanisms perpetuating racial inequity, which the current study intends to do.

Background: Racial Inequity in U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Sport Organizations

Excluded from the TIDES reports, The USOPC created a similar tool, ‘Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Scorecards’, to assess their organizational patterns, which yields similar results that the researcher’s background can attest to (USOPC, 2021). Before the researcher’s PhD journey, she worked for an NGB for two years, in which she experienced and observed the racially homogenous culture of the USOPC. While she worked as the lone Black woman in a building of 100 people across 4 NGBs, she attended various USOPC-wide events and observed the extreme lack of racial diversity among the professional staff. This observation, coupled with her experience as the “only” led to subsequent interest, inquiry, and analysis into the actual representation of Olympic-level sport organizations.

Mandated by the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Act (1978), every four years, the USOPC is responsible for (a) collecting demographic data, (b) producing scorecards for each member organization detailing the makeup of their membership, athletes, coaches, board of directors, standing committees and professional staff, and (c) submitting the report to congress (USOPC, 2021). The specific demographic categories measured are women, persons with disabilities, military veterans, and people of color. Each demographic category is assigned a percentage-based benchmark based on U.S. census and unique organizational data, serving as a target to reach in each internal category (e.g., athletes, coaches, professional staff, etc.).

Despite the USOPC emphasizing the importance of organizational “uniqueness” (e.g., history, the composition of athletes) to benchmark construction, the benchmark for

people of color in front office staff for all NGBs and HPMOs from 2013-20 was 25.21%, serving as a standard for assessment and comparative means (USOPC, 2021). In other words, the USOPC suggests that people of color should consistently constitute 25.21% of professional staff positions in each organization. However, demographic data reveals the majority of these organizations struggle to reach this benchmark consistently, and multiple organizations have never reached the 25.21% benchmark for people of color in professional staff once during these eight years. For example, through an analysis of USOPC scorecard data over eight years (2013-2020), 30 out of 55 NGBs and HPMOs (54.5%) perpetually failed to reach the standard 25.21% benchmark for people of color in front office staff – never reaching the benchmark once. In contrast, only 3 of 55 (5%) organizations consistently met that benchmark every year. To illustrate this widespread disproportionality, USA Hockey and USA Equestrian’s professional staff consists of over 100 individuals each, and people of color have consistently held less than 5% percent of professional staff positions within these organizations over these eight years. Thus, despite the percentage of people of color in professional staff positions increasing from 11% in 2013 to 17% in 2020, data suggests many organizations continue to underperform in fostering racially diverse workforces. This insight is striking, considering non-White individuals constituted 38.4% of the United States population in 2020 (U.S. Census, 2020).

The Problem

When exploring the lack of racial diversity in organizations, human resource management (HRM) and DEI literature describes a variety of contributory factors

including hiring practices, organizational culture, and retention practices (Cunningham, 2019; DeSensi, 1994; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; O'Reilly & Banki, 2016). While remaining cognizant of this conglomerate, a starting point in exploring inequity is recognizing the role of organizational practices and how they impact DEI in organizations. In response, the problem that the current study explores is how the hiring practices of an Olympic-level sport organization may (re)produce racial inequity.

The Gap in Literature

Over the past 20 years, scholarship investigating hiring with respect to race has explored various contexts, including academia, business, and law within United States and international labor markets, to detect race-related disparities in search procedures, the influence of White hiring agents on hiring practices, the impact of hiring personnel identities in relation to job hunter identity, racial preferences, and the basis of selection (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Fernandez & Fernandez-Mateo, 2006; Fujimoto, 2012; Stoll et al., 2004; Undurraga, 2019). Existing studies have provided insight into forms of bias and discrimination operating on multiple organizational levels; however, they contain key limitations, including race being among other sociological factors (gender, class, sexuality), the lack of investigating hiring practices from the organization's perspective (attraction, recruitment, selection), and how they may be contributory to racial inequities. Further, despite existing scholarship providing insight on hiring practices in differing contexts, a small body of research has been conducted on the U.S. sport industry. Given the unique context of the sport industry, there is a need to examine mechanisms possibly contributory to contemporary racial inequity.

In sport organizations, race is operationalized to privilege the White race as the majority and subordinate people of color through exclusion and marginalization, becoming the minority. To explore this phenomenon, sport scholars have investigated hiring-related patterns, preferences, and criteria in coaching and leadership. These studies have provided insight into individual-level issues such as bias, preferences, and societal issues such as institutionalized discrimination and political ideology (Collins, 2007; Fuerstman & Lavertu, 2005; Grappendorf et al., 2011; Pastore & Meacci, 1994; Ross & Blackman, 1998; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Singer et al., 2010). However, a fundamental limitation within existing sport studies is the lack of focus on organizational practices in sport organizations and how they may contribute to racial inequities.

Throughout hiring-related literature, there remains a gap and need for a study that conducts an in-depth investigation into an organization's hiring practices (e.g., processes, procedures) with respect to race. In sport, demographic data such as the TIDES reports and the USOPC scorecards suggest racial inequity exists in organizational practices. Thus, scholars must investigate the structural mechanisms contributing to this ongoing racial inequity. Further, to explore hiring issues with respect to race, scholars often employ quantitative methods (e.g., surveys) or qualitative methods using various approaches (e.g., simulation, job-seekers perspective). However, in this study, the case study design will sensitize the researcher to an organizations hiring practices to provide practical insight into the practices and the role of race. Broadly, this study seeks to add to the academy by placing organizational hiring practices as the unit of analysis to

illuminate factors contributing to the perpetuation of racial inequity in an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization.

Conceptual Direction

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of (a) prominent HRM practices guiding hiring, (b) an overview of DEI and the influence of race and racial ideology in sport organizations, (c) the impact of personal and organizational culture on hiring activities, and (d) the ways racial exclusion persist in sport organizations. In doing, so, I draw on the work of numerous critical scholars, including Bernstein and colleagues (2020), Bonilla-Silva (2018), Cunningham (2019), DeSensi (1994), Doherty & Chelladurai (1999), Hurd and colleagues (2020), Omi and Winant (2015), and Otten and colleagues (2014). Building the conceptual foundation in this format provides insight into (a) the impact of DEI in sport organizations hiring practices, (b) the ways cultural exclusion implicitly persists through organizational structures, (c) prominent racial ideologies interwoven through organizational structures, and (d) effective HRM strategies, which will ultimately assist in answering the research questions and contextualizing the findings of this study.

Theoretical Direction

To investigate this subject through a critical lens, a constructionist epistemological approach will be employed. Epistemology is a “system of knowing” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p.257) characterizing the emergence of knowledge (Crotty, 1998). Through a constructionist perspective, knowledge is constructed through humans

interpreting the subject matter, in which varying meanings or truths emerge. In this study, knowledge will be co-constructed by allowing meaning to emerge within its social context (Crotty, 1998).

Epistemology and theory are interrelated because epistemological approaches inform theoretical perspectives (Crotty, 1998). For instance, a common theoretical perspective associated with constructionism is critical inquiry, and critical-related theories serve to explore power relations within society (Crotty, 1998). Further, employing a critical theoretical direction in research allows the narrative to shift from hegemonic structures of traditional knowledge designed to control knowledge construction by challenging domination and inequality (Singer, 2005). Systematically, critical inquiry serves to critique data in efforts to identify, oppose, and challenge oppressive forces, ultimately constructing knowledge in an emancipatory and practical way (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Crotty, 1998). In the social sciences, critical theories (e.g., critical race theory, feminist theory, queer theory) have been instrumental in addressing discrimination, oppression, and unequal power relations (Frisby, 2005). In sport management, socio-cultural scholars have challenged researchers to consider critical approaches to knowledge construction by positioning their work outside of Eurocentric knowledge systems (DeSensi, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Singer, 2005).

Ray's (2019a) *Theory of Racialized Organizations* conceptualizes organizational structures (e.g., policies, processes) as fundamental in constructing racial inequities.

Ray's (2019a) theory is beneficial to this study because it will illuminate the organizational factors (re)producing racial inequities. Another valuable theory for this

study draws from Gidden's (1984) *Theory of Structuration*, suggesting social structures are reproduced through the relationship between agency and structures. In this study, structuration theory will be used to illuminate the relationship between HRM practices and individual actions, and their role in reproducing inequities. These socio-cultural theories will aid in the knowledge construction process by providing a critical lens to the data to answer the research questions effectively.

Methodological Direction

A qualitative methodology and case study design were selected as most appropriate to seek an understanding of hiring practices for various reasons. First, the characteristics of qualitative research - natural setting, focus is on meaning, provides rich descriptions, inductive, and researcher is the primary instrument - aligns with the purpose of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Similarly, case study was selected as the most suitable design because its components, procedures, and data collection techniques allow the researcher to answer the research questions effectively (Yin, 2017). In the current study, the case study design positions the researcher to conduct an *in-depth investigation on a bounded system, using multiple data collection tools to obtain a holistic understanding of the case*. In respect to other approaches, varying qualitative designs including narrative inquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and action research were not selected because this study is not (a) positioning experiences and stories as the subject (e.g., narrative inquiry, phenomenology), (b) developing a theory (e.g., grounded theory), (c) interested in cultural meanings and behaviors of a group (e.g.,

ethnography), (d) nor taking and evaluating action (e.g., action research) (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to seek an understanding of the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization and the ways in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity.

Significance of the Study

The USOPC scorecard data reveals the marginalization and exclusion of people of color in professional staff positions, as many organizations have perpetually failed to reach their benchmark. Within the academy, minimal research has critically analyzed organizational patterns through positioning a system that may be contributing to inequities as the unit of analysis. This study will add to the literature by illuminating some of the major forces contributing to the slow progress in an Olympic level sport organization's hiring of people of color and cycles of (re)producing racial inequity. Ultimately, this study will (a) provide a window into the hiring practices of an Olympic-level sport organization, (b) examine the ways in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity, (c) provide sport organizations empirical-based suggestions on how hiring practices can become more racially equitable. This study is significant through a broad lens because it may unearth racial inequities within the hiring practices of an Olympic-level sport organization.

Definition of Key Terms

Diversity: The presence of social differences amongst a group (Ferdman & Deane, 2013).

Equity: Facilitating ethics, fairness, and justice (Bernstein et al., 2020).

Hiring practices: All organizational hiring activities (e.g., procedures, processes, strategies, policies) (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Schneider & Barbera, 2014).

Inclusion: A climate in which differences are welcomed, accepted, and facilitates a sense of belonging (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Otten et al., 2014).

National Governing Body (NGB), High-Performance Management Organization

(HPMO): Olympic-level sport organizations consisting of a variety of stakeholders including staff, memberships, coaches, athletes, board of directors, and additional committees (USOPC, 2021).

People of color: The term operationalized by the USOPC to delineate individuals not of White descent (USOPC, 2021).

Race: A social construction signified by bodily characteristics (Bonilla-Silva, 2018 Jablonski, 2021; Omi & Winant, 2015).

(Re)produce: A dualistic term to describe the production and reproduction; the creation and solidification; of a phenomenon.

United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC): The national Olympic and Paralympic committee of the United States that governs national governing bodies and high-performance management organizations (USOPC, 2021).

Chapter Summary

The current study will provide meaningful contributions to the fields of human resource management, sociology, and sport management as it may illuminate the ways in which forms of racism persist through organizational structures. Within the sport academy, there is a growing body of literature addressing racial hiring patterns through micro and macro-level approaches (e.g., decision making, hiring preferences, bias), which limits their findings to individual characteristics and societal norms (Cunningham, 2019; Grappendorf et al., 2019; Harrison et al., 2009). This study is constructed to further the analysis by identifying organizational factors that may be contributing to disproportionate organizational representation. Specifically, the current study explores the hiring practices of an Olympic-level organization to characterize the ways in which racial inequity may be (re)produced.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of literature relevant to the hiring practices of sport organizations with respect to race. Through a bottom-up approach, HRM literature will provide foundational insight into the development of human resource management, while contextualizing modern-day hiring practices and challenges. Next, diversity, equity, and inclusion scholarship is introduced to illuminate the importance of racial ideology and its influence on hiring practices. Lastly, scholarship related to Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations and structuration theory outlines its suitability and capability to effectively theoretically buttress this study.

Human Resource Management

Human resource management (HRM) is an organizational practice and academic discipline conceptualized and theorized by scholars situated in multiple disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, economics). In organizations, HRM is a significant function responsible for overseeing human capital whose roles range from entry-level assistants to more specialized positions, including recruiters, officers, directors, and generalists (Bauer et al., 2020; Hollenbeck et al., 2015; Tiell & Walton, 2017). In academia, HRM scholars conduct research to develop concepts, theories, and phenomena related to the comprehensive function of HRM.

Throughout scholarship, HRM has been defined varyingly through broad and narrow approaches. For instance, Armstrong and Taylor (2020) conceptualized HRM as

including “all aspects of how people are employed and managed in organizations” (p.5). Whereas, Mathis, Jackson, and Valentine (2015) provided a more detailed descriptor of HRM as a function involving “designing formal systems in an organization to manage human talent for accomplishing organizational goals... including recruitment, selection, training and management” (p.2). In its essence, HRM involves the function of managing people in work settings.

The Evolution of HRM

The practice of people management is often traced to Drucker’s (1954) conceptualization of humans as resources. However, managing labor predates this, as scholars identify formal labor consisting of the employee-employer relationship through the conceptualization of personnel management, also known as personnel administration (Eilbirt, 1959). Stemming from the concept of management, personnel management developed through the ways employees were managed through labor organizations beginning in the late 1800s. In the United States, the management of employees began through welfare work and the scientific era of management which focused on efficiency within systems. Key features of personnel administration from the late 1800s and early 1900s serving relevance in HR today include job analysis, description and requirements; employee recruitment, selection, training, promotion, turnover, and placement; and scientific ways to promote organizational efficiency and structures (Eilbirt, 1959, p.347; Hurd et al., 2020).

In 1954, Peter Drucker’s *The Practice of Management* introduced humans as an organizational resource by coining the term “human resource.” Within this book, Drucker

(1954) identified several functions of management, including effectively managing “work and workers” as human resources (Drucker, 2007). According to Drucker (2007), when work and workers are managed through a humanistic approach, the personnel management concerns of productivity, efficiency, and suitability are inherently fostered (Drucker, 2007). Similarly, Bakke’s (1958) book *The Human Resource Function* illuminated the importance of human resources within the role of management (Marciano, 1995). In turn, HR-related theories emerged, including McGregors (1960) theories of X and Y describing how management styles affect the productivity of employees, Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy illuminating the nature of employee needs, Herzberg’s (1959) motivation-hygiene theory characterizing employee motivators, and systems theory positing organizations as systems (Hurd et al., 2020; Klein et al., 2000). Despite these emerging insights, the concept of HRM was trivialized in academia (Marciano, 1995). However, in practice, organizations began to adopt a people focus, positioning the relationship between managers and employees as a predictor of organizational success (Hurd et al., 2020).

HRM was further established in the 1980s through concepts, models, frameworks, and theories (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Thornthwaite, 2012). Drucker’s (1954) and Bakke’s (1958) foundational ideas were revisited through foundational models created by Charles Fombrun and colleagues (1984) and Michael Beer and colleagues (1984) (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Fombrun and colleagues (1984) matching model explains the relationship between human resources and organizational strategy, and their Michigan model focuses on the HR practices of “selection, appraisal, development, and rewards”

(Bratton & Gold, 2017, p.18) to illuminate its critical impact on organizational performance. Beer and colleagues (1984) Harvard model is a comprehensive framework illustrating the interconnectedness of “situation factors” and “stakeholder interests” on HRM “policy”, “outcomes”, and “long-term consequences” (Bratton & Gold, 2017, p.20). In addition, Beer illuminated the need for a strategic approach to HRM, involving considering long-term implications (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Bratton & Gold, 2017). Further underpinning the essence of HRM is theories explaining employee behaviors, motivation, commitment, and the strategic approach to HRM (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Guest, 1987; Taylor et al., 2020).

Contemporary HRM Practices

Continuing with the idea of humans as resources, modern-day HRM is oriented toward strategy, primarily due to the 21st century technological advancement of the internet establishing human resource information and management systems – technological systems digitizing HRM practices (e.g., employee data, hiring and evaluation documents, salary information, etc.) (Kavanagh et al., 2012; Lussier & Hendon, 2020). Further undergirding HRM throughout the 21st century are “quality” and “best practices” (Hurd et al., 2020). In reference to quality, Deming (1981) outlined core HRM principles prioritizing the consumer's perspective because his belief was if the organization was going to produce quality outputs, the consumer's perspective must be acknowledged and operationalized. From this standpoint, principles were created to promote organizational quality. Additionally, best practices – standardized procedures –

for organizations were cultivated based on a conglomerate of management theories and ideas outlining the function of management and leadership (Hurd et al., 2020).

Further, strategic HRM (SHRM) is a prominent organizational practice due to its ability to influence performance and develop a competitive advantage (Lussier & Hendon, 2020; Taylor et al., 2015). In response, organizations establish targeted HR strategies relative to their organizational needs (Rotich, 2015). SHRM has even been reflected in Snell and colleagues (2015) contemporary definition of HRM as “analyzing a company’s competitive environment and designing jobs so a firms *strategy* can be successfully implemented to beat the competition requiring identifying, recruiting, and selecting the right people for those jobs” (p.4). Conceptually, SHRM is the process of aligning one’s long-term business strategies with their HR strategy (Lussier & Hendon, 2020). Further, SHRM theories illuminate the relationship between organizational strategy and organizational performance.

Prominent HRM strategies include human capital management, knowledge management, corporate social responsibility (CSR), development, resourcing, performance and rewards, and employee well-being (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Human capital management is a strategy using data to inform practices (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Knowledge management involves leveraging organizational knowledge to improve organizational performance (Scarbrough, 2003). CSR strategies are designed to positively impact society and its environment. Development strategies are targeted toward implementing organizational practices to improve organizational performance.

Finally, employee well-being is prioritizing conditions of employees. Of principle relevance to this paper is resourcing, which operationalizes hiring practices as a strategy.

Resourcing strategically consists of tactically selecting, training, retaining, and promoting individuals that fit with the organizational needs and long-term business strategies (Taylor et al., 2020). Strategic resourcing practices involve workforce planning, developing employer brand and employee value, resourcing and retention plans, flexibility plans, and talent management (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Of principle relevance to hiring practices are workforce planning, employer brand development, and resourcing. These strategies are critical to the personnel process because (a) workforce planning is a proactive strategy to determine short and long-term workforce needs, (b) establishing employer brand and value assists in attracting candidates through revealing the nature of organizations, and (c) resource planning involves strategically planning how to recruit and select talent (Bauer et al., 2020; Stredwick, 2013).

Responsible for orchestrating this entire process are trained and certified HRM professionals (Rees & Smith, 2021). However, depending on the organization, HR-related committees and task forces are developed to assist in the hiring process. Individuals situated as executives, managers, and additional leadership often serve on these decision-making groups (Bauer et al., 2020). However, the primary responsibilities belong to HR professionals as they develop hiring committees, conduct workforce planning, gather candidate data, establish hiring policies, develop job descriptions, announcements and postings, recruitment, salary and benefits, training, employee well-being and more (Bauer et al., 2020; Bratton & Gold, 2017; Lussier & Hendon, 2020;

Stredwick, 2013). Based on HRM scholarship, the remainder of this HRM section describes routine hiring practices within the hiring process.

Hiring Practices

To coincide with the organization's strategic approach, workforce planning, also known as personnel planning or HR planning, is a strategy consisting of an organization conducting a needs assessment to explore the roles and skillset needed commensurate with organizational goals, ensuring the workforce aligns with organizational goals (Bauer et al., 2020; Hollenbeck et al., 2015; Mathis et al., 2015). The elements of workforce planning include business planning, population analysis, scenario planning, internal and external data collection and analysis, supply and demand forecasting, and action planning (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Bauer et al., 2020; Mathis et al., 2015; Lussier & Hendon, 2020). Of principle relevance to this paper are supply and demand forecasting because they provide data-based information regarding the quantity and quality of employees needed and the talent available (Mathis et al., 2015). This workforce assessment is crucial because it informs hiring practices, and the ways talent is managed (Hollenbeck et al., 2015). For instance, a needs assessment may suggest a need for employees with a specific skill set. In turn, recruitment, selection, and development strategies are tailored toward that skill set. However, the central challenge of workforce planning includes preparing for the future because the business world and the economy are ever-changing. Because long-term planning is challenging, organizations often create short-term staffing plans (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Once organizations determine the organizational needs, HR conducts a job analysis to systematically define the nature of the job, which informs the job design, descriptions, and requirements (Lussier & Hendon, 2020; Taylor et al., 2020). Primary requirements developed throughout this process includes minimum entrance requirements (MERs) – qualifications, experience – and Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities, and other attributes (KSAOs) (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Hurd et al., 2020; Mathis et al., 2015; Picardi, 2019; Snell et al., 2015). This process of establishing qualifications should be strategic because they inform preceding practices (e.g., job description, recruitment strategies). For example, job descriptions include (a) a detailed explanation of the role, its functions, and conditions, (b) MERs and KSAOs, (c) salary information, and (d) contact information (Hurd et al., 2020). Similarly, the job posting informally attracts applicants because it encompasses the (a) job title, (b) organization and position information, (c) qualifications and requirements, salary information, and how to apply (Arthur, 2015; Hurd et al., 2020). Because job designs, descriptions, requirements, and postings are fundamental to the nature of the applicant pool, it's important to consider the ways in which these practices may foster racial inequity.

Along with the KSAO's and MER's necessary for the role, organizations search, identify, recruit, and select candidates that fit well with the organization's values and culture, which scholars theorized and conceptualized (Chelladurai, 2012). For example, the concept of person-organization fit suggests job seekers and employers pursue candidates based on perceived fit with the organization (Bratton & Gold, 2017). However, through a critical lens, the idea of "fit" within the hiring process is subjective,

with the tendency to hire based on social similarity, often working against minority groups (Picardi, 2019). Due to the influence of “fit” on hiring practices, the ways organizations operationalize “fit” is a critical consideration.

Once the job has been posted and announced, the organization formally attracts qualified candidates through internal and/or external recruitment methods (Arthur, 2015; Hollenbeck et al., 2015). To cast a wide net, recruitment should be exercised through internal and external means. Internal recruitment involves considering existing employees as viable candidates, yielding cost-efficiency, and employee loyalty (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Arthur, 2015; Lussier & Hendon, 2020). However, using internal recruitment as a dominant practice has the tendency to produce cycles of homophily, homologous reproduction, and social similarity, ultimately reproducing the status quo (Stredwick, 2013).

External recruitment involves seeking candidates outside of the organization, yielding distinct benefits associated with attracting a diverse pool of candidates (Bauer et al., 2019). Primary external recruitment methods include traditional advertisements (e.g., through paper sources), online tools (e.g., organizational websites, agencies, social media, job board websites), agencies, consultants, educational institutions, in-person recruitment (e.g., job fairs), and informal networks (Arthur, 2015; Hurd et al., 2020). In an effort to attract the most qualified candidates, scholars recommend employers use varying recruitment methods, depending on the role and situation. Further, scholars exploring inequality in hiring assert the ways in which one is recruited detrimentally impacts specific identities. For instance, recruiting through personal and professional

networks can detrimentally affect the experiences of people of color throughout multiple stages in the hiring process (e.g., screening, selection), which provides further rationale into why organizations should intentionally and strategically recruit minority groups to foster a diverse workforce (Fernandez & Mors, 2008; Hurd et al., 2020; Kmec, 2006). In this study, contextualizing recruitment-related scholarship against organizational data can illuminate the ways in which recruitment strategies may contribute to the reproduction of racial inequity in underperforming organizations.

After recruitment, selection involves a formalized systematic process, testing applicants through screening, interviewing, and/or assessments (Hurd et al., 2020). Systematically, once organizations receive applications, HR personnel must “examine, process, and sort” (p.234) application materials to discover candidates aligning with the MERs and KSAOs, placing them in categories designating their suitability for the role (Hurd et al., 2020). When exploring inequality, the ways candidates are sorted and ranked are of principle importance to deconstruct sources of inequality (Fernandez & Mors, 2008; Reskin & Roos, 2009). For example, Thurow’s (1975) concept of labor queueing describes how Blacks were less successful in the labor market due to employers ranking them low in the labor queue. In turn, scholars have recommended employers utilize the practice of blind screening to aid in eliminating reviewer bias (Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018; Neumark, 2021).

Further informing inequity is Spence’s (1973) theory of *signaling* which analyzes the communicative dynamics between two parties, the “signaler” and the “receiver” (Guest et al., 2020, p.6). In HRM literature, the employer and candidate are prominent

parties involved in this communication process, in which messages are sent and interpreted, ultimately influencing actions. Specifically, throughout the hiring process, candidates and employers send signals to each other, informing hiring decisions and candidate perceptions of the organization (Spence, 1973). Regarding inequity, Hilal and colleagues' (2017) study found that some hiring managers search for *homogenous signals* (e.g., white, male) to fill roles with particular candidates. In relation to the current study, the concept of signaling is particularly useful to inform the micro and meso-level of organizational structures by how the communicative messages of hiring practices and candidate signals may contribute to inequitable outcomes (Celani & Singh, 2011).

Once qualified candidates have been identified, the interview process begins. The purpose of interviews is to provide employers further insight into the ways in which one's MERs, KSAOs, core competencies, characteristics, and behaviors align with the organization and role. The format of interviews varies from unstructured to structured; online, phone, face to face, and group; and could range from 30 minutes to hours (Bauer et al., 2019). Regarding inequity, the typologies, structure, and nature of interviews impact candidate success. For instance, structured interviews promote equity through a standardized interview protocol. Unstructured interviews, however, are vulnerable to subjectivity in which the interview is discussion-based with no interview protocol, gathering varying candidate data. Further, due to the subjectivity of interviews, homologous interview panels detrimentally impact minority interviewees (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Regarding evaluation, scholars assert a standardized measurement tool should be employed because organizations tend to evaluate based on behavioral characteristics, which leads to unequal outputs such as homophily and organizational cultures of similarity (Hurd et al., 2020; Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018). To further counter subjective evaluation processes, testing methods (e.g., intelligence, personality, aptitude) may be employed (Bauer et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2015). Testing and assessments are used less frequently than interviews. However, they provide objective and measurable insight into candidate characteristics, including intelligence, behaviors, personality, values, and ability (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Bauer et al., 2019). Within HRM practices, interviews and testing can be used independently or symbiotically to select a candidate properly. As a result of assessment practices, the top candidate is selected, an offer letter is sent, references are accessed, background checks and physical exams are conducted, and contractual paperwork is drawn up (Hurd et al., 2020; Tiell & Walton, 2017). The practices organizations enact to evaluate and select candidates are of principal importance to this study as they can play a role in perpetuating racial inequity.

HRM Conclusion

The reviewed HRM literature identified the procedural components of hiring and additional prominent practices. As organizations employ hiring practices to effectively attract, recruit, and select talent, a primary challenge remains in fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace (Arthur, 2015; Bauer et al., 2019; Lussier & Hendon, 2020; Snell et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2020). With respect to sport organizations, sport scholarship details the lack of diversity, exclusive cultures and inequity presiding in sport

organizations (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2013; Johnson & Newton, 2020; Lapchick, 2020). The forthcoming section explores DEI in sport organizational literature, race and racial ideology, and its influence on hiring practices.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The terms *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion* are often adopted as synonymous in organizational settings (e.g., DEI workgroups, DEI websites, DEI statements); however, they contain conceptual distinctions. Drawing from Cunningham's (2019) scholarship, *diversity* is defined as "the presence of socially meaningful differences among members of a dyad or group" (p.6). However, Cunningham's (2019) use of "socially meaningful" provides ambiguity regarding what differences are "meaningful" and to whom. Thus, this paper adopts diversity as the presence of social differences amongst a group (Ferdman & Deane, 2013). These differences are identity-based (e.g., race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, personality, skills, experiences, etc.) and its ascribed cultural meanings (e.g., language, norms) (Ferdman & Deane, 2013; Herring & Henderson, 2014). In an organizational context, diversity manifested represents a conglomerate of races, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, ages, abilities, social classes, skills, attributes, and other individual differences. Conversely, the lack of diversity is signaled through social homogeneity. Thus, organizational diversity is attained through attracting, hiring, and retaining individuals with different identities (Herring & Henderson, 2014). Over the past century, legislation has aided in facilitating this process through forbidding forms of hiring discrimination, but attracting, selecting, and retaining a diverse workforce is an ongoing challenge for sport entities.

Inclusion, however, operationalizes diversity through facilitating acceptance and a sense of belonging. Inclusive organizations create and sustain an environment that welcomes, supports, and values individual differences (Ferdman & Deane, 2014). Conceptually, inclusion in the workplace is “the degree to which employees are free to express their individuated self and have a sense of workplace connectedness and belonging” (Cunningham, 2019, p.7). The organization's primary role is to act as a bridge between individual identities and the organization by creating organizational practices and culture that fosters comfortability and a sense of belonging (Otten et al., 2014). As a result, employees should be able to maintain their uniqueness without compromise, while simultaneously feeling a sense of belonging amongst the collective (Barak, 2015; Otten et al., 2014). For example, in an inclusive sport organization, all racial identities should be able to express their authentic selves while providing value to the organization. Unfortunately, many sport organizations are exclusive in which differences are often marginalized through exclusionary practices (Hoffman et al., 2019; Walker & Melton, 2015).

Equality and *equity* are related terms, but they are not the same. Equality refers to equal access to opportunities, while equity involves facilitating ethics, fairness, and justice across organizational practices (Bernstein et al., 2020). Legislation and policies prohibit forms of discrimination and inequality, but inequitable structures persist through systemic exclusionary practices. Equitable frameworks serve to address structural inequities through adjusting organizational practices infiltrated with implicit and explicit disparities to promote fairness in organizational practices such as hiring and advancement

opportunities (Bernstein et al., 2020). Within sport organizations, inequity is signaled through the underrepresentation of minority identities and negative work experiences (e.g., alienation, exclusion, invisibility) (Hoeber, 2007; Massengale & Lough, 2013; Walker & Melton, 2015). Thus, facilitating equity requires identifying the structural causes of this underrepresentation and unequal treatment, and adjusting organizational practices to rectify these issues.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion differ conceptually, yet are interrelated through the lens of social justice. The presence of diversity without fostering an environment conducive for inclusion and equitable practices inevitably leads to forms of decoupling – a gap between formal rules and organizational practices (Berry, 2016; Ray, 2019a). For example, hiring people of color provides a veneer of DEI, but inequity becomes institutionalized if they are situated in an environment perpetuating racist systems (Cooper et al., 2020). Similarly, organizations fostering inclusive cultures while simultaneously perpetuating inequitable systems is inherently ineffective. Thus, in this study, an organization's hiring practices is explored to investigate the ways they may contribute to the lack of racial diversity within the organization.

Race & Racial Ideology

Because racial diversity is a central component of this study, this section outlines racial ideology and its influence on hiring practices. Historically, racial ideology – as a hierarchal system in which Whiteness resides at the top – emerged in the 15th century as a result of increasing European conquest of the world and the transformation of slavery into a racialized institution. (Banton, 1965; Keating, 1995; Kendi, 2016; Reynolds &

Lieberman, 1993). Racialized narratives developed using physical differences to justify chattel slavery – the ownership of human beings – marking people of color as inherently *evil*, *undesirable*, *savage*, and *inferior* (Dennis, 1995; Jablonski, 2021). Whiteness, however, was associated with *purity*, *goodness*, and *superiority* (Keating, 1995; Jablonski, 2021). Since the colonial era in the United States, race as a social category signified by bodily characteristics (e.g., skin color, hair texture) has shaped the United States social system, centering White domination and Black subordination (Keating, 1995; Jablonski, 2021; Omi & Winant, 2015). This racial order has evolved over time, yet continues to create challenges for people of color to access housing, transportation, political agency, employment, and economic freedom (Omi & Winant, 2015).

Through an academic lens, philosophers such as Kant and Hume pushed the scientific presumption of race as a biological category, ultimately defending their stance of White superiority (Nwosimiri, 2017). Within this biological framework, skin color signaled information regarding individual capability as Whiteness was correlated with a range of ability and naturally superior, while those perceived as “nonwhite” lacked talent and training, inferring overall inadequacy and inferiority (Jablonski, 2021). Further, in the early 1900s, academics and scientists continued this narrative of biology as racial destiny, solidifying it as the dominant worldview (Andreasen, 2000; Suzuki & Von Vacano, 2018). As the 20th century progressed, however, some social scientists, such as W.E.B. Du Bois contested scientific racism through conducting empirical research whose findings revealed that race is not a mere biological category but a social construction in

which society is responsible for creating racial differences that produce racialized effects on groups (Morris, 2015). In fact, the social construction of race has heavily affected people of color in America, including racialized differences in housing, healthcare, and the law (Omi & Winant, 2015).

Today, the scholarly consensus is that race is a social construction, and various approaches to understanding race have emerged (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Suzuki & Von Vacano, 2018). Specifically, this dissertation adopts the idea that race as a social construct creates social realities that systemically privilege White people and marginalize people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). In society, Whiteness has been deemed property, granting Whites societal privileges (Harris, 1993). In the workplace, Whiteness is linked with ideas about leadership and a superior work ethic, which favors Whites throughout hiring processes (Gündemir et al., 2014; Kirshenman & Nickerman, 1999).

In sport organizations, Whiteness as property has been operationalized to marginalize people of color in workspaces. Because White males in leadership positions are normative in sport, individual biases of leadership craft selection decisions, ultimately impacting careers (Kay et al., 2012; Vianden & Gregg, 2017). Thus, those in leadership positions possess the autonomy to (re)produce inequitable structures (Hawkins, 2010). Further, because racism sustains the majority's privilege and status in the racial order, they are less likely to dismantle it and more likely (re)produce the status quo, making this cycle systemic (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Concerning the current study, because race is socially constructed and creates social realities, investigating

structural forces in sport organizations contributing to disproportionality provides insight into the (re)production of race in society.

Racial Ideology

As races were socially constructed, ideologies – systems of thought – of inferiority and superiority established and explicated the racial order, embodying the essence of racism. Despite this overtly racist frame of thinking shifting, color-blindness and race-neutrality have emerged as dominant contemporary expressions of racism used to justify the racial order and (re)produce the status quo (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Because these ideas are established in the premise that race and racism are historical phenomena no longer serving relevance, these ideologies impact organizations, and organizational practices.

Color-blind ideology is based on the notion of not seeing race, ultimately trivializing the influence of race within society. According to Bonilla-Silva (2018), color-blindness is oriented toward (a) liberalism, which focuses on equality, choice, and individuality (b) the idea that societal racial differences are natural, inherent, ordinary, and *just the way it is* (c) using cultural assumptions to explain the racial order, and (d) the belief that racism no longer affects the experiences of people color. Presented as unbiased, this ideology perpetuates white dominance and superiority because diminishing the significance of race to the social order asserts that no forms of inequity are at play and change isn't necessary. Through a critical lens, color-blind ideology works to obscure structural, engrained forms of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Mayorga-Gallo, 2019; Plaut et al., 2018).

Drawing from Bonilla-Silva's (2018) liberalism and minimalization of racism frames, *race-neutral* ideology adopts races as equal, with no differential treatment to any racial groups (Leong, 2017; Saito, 2009). In the name of equality, race-neutrality is ostensibly progressive however, when considering equity, such a position is detrimental because it fails to acknowledge the inherent disadvantages people of color experience and the effects thereof. In the perspective of hiring practices, extracting race from consciousness decouples race from power relations, ultimately ignoring individual, organizational, and societal forms of racism. Further, through promoting race-neutrality in the hiring process, the status quo is more likely to be reproduced due to structural forms of racism (Light et al., 2011).

Concerning organizations and race, *diversity ideology* illuminates how organizations conceptualize and operationalize diversity. Considering diversity as an ideology, when organizations aim for organizational representation through such strategies as benchmarks and awards, those mechanisms often operate as an impression management tactic to obscure systemic inequity, reproducing inequitable systems and the status quo (Mayorga-Gallo, 2019). In relation to the Olympic movement, a forthcoming study by Gardner and colleagues identified the USOPC as employing color-blind and race-neutral tactics, ultimately concluding that they operationalize diversity ideology's tenet of *intent by* communicating a value for diversity through rhetoric, initiatives, and benchmarking systems, rather than addressing active structural issues. Thus, informed by previous research, the current study focuses on the hiring system within an

underperforming Olympic-level sport organization to learn about its contribution to ongoing racial inequity.

Personal Culture & Organizational Culture

Further impacting racial diversity in organizations are personal cultures and organizational cultures. The personal culture of every human draws from their intersecting individual identities, background, and experiences, which ultimately shapes their worldview (Schein, 2016). Surface-level, deep-level, additional characteristics and subcultures includes but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexuality, religion, ability, social class, family, traditions, affiliations, hometown, marital status, parental status, educational institutions, sports teams, etc., and its ascribed meanings, values, assumptions, and rituals, constitutes one's personal culture (DeSensi, 1994; Otten et al., 2014; Schein, 2016). In turn, all social interactions become multicultural as each individual comprises a unique cultural makeup. *Multiculturalism*, also known as *cultural diversity*, is valuing cultural differences, and unfortunately, many sport organizations lack this cultural consciousness (DeSensi, 1994). Cultural deficiency becomes problematic in work settings because personal culture impacts organizational performance and success. For example, individual cultural understandings regarding time, space, behaviors, and interactions impact the ways in which people navigate the workplace, ultimately influencing their performance and organizational success. Further, the absence of a holistic understanding that diverse cultures inevitably produce differences creates ideologies of superiority and inferiority, which is prevalent in society and the workplace (Ferdman & Deane, 2013).

Individual identities often guide societal interactions primarily due to social constructions, and scholarship reveals that the social construction of race heavily affects the workplace. In work organizations, people of color often experience differential treatment due to stereotypes (e.g., cultural based widespread beliefs), prejudice (e.g., preconceived judgement about a specific cultural group), and discrimination (e.g., differential treatment based on cultural difference) (Brutschy & Zachary 2014; Cunningham, 2019). Ultimately, difference is often operationalized in work settings to classify, privilege, and marginalize, heavily influencing organizational practices.

Grasping the conceptual foundations of personal culture is essential to organizational success as equitable practices must be adopted to benefit from cultural diversity. For example, Deloitte is nationally recognized as one of the most diverse and profitable corporations in the financial sector and is a sponsor for multiple sport entities (e.g., USOPC, WNBA). Their official 2021 demographic report indicates their total workforce consists of 41.4% racial minorities and 43.9% women (Deloitte, 2021). Economically, by the end of the 2020 fiscal year, they reigned in over \$47.6 billion of revenue (Deloitte, 2020). Similarly, sport scholars have elucidated on the benefits of racial diversity including competitive advantage through increased production, creativity, decision making, problem-solving, and innovation, however, people of color are often marginalized (Cunningham, 2009; Cunningham & Sagas, 2004; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). In turn, a sport organization attempting to hire diverse cultural backgrounds effectively must acknowledge the benefits of personal culture while remaining cognizant

of the detrimental effects of social constructions so their organizational culture doesn't contribute to racialized inequities.

Organizational Culture

Conceptually, organizational culture is shared assumptions, beliefs, symbols, rituals, experiences, value systems internalized by individuals within an organization (Pettigrew, 1979). In short, organizational culture encompasses the organizational belief system, which guide individual actions. Meaning, organizational members are assumed to adopt homogenous belief systems regarding an organization's operations (Chuang et al., 2004; DeSensi, 1994; Van den Steen, 2010). Organizational culture influences organizational activity, often revealed through structures, values, artifacts, processes, policies, behaviors, procedures, and diversity (Cunningham, 2019; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Schein, 2016).

An organization's culture can be discerned through observation and experience. For example, an organization's value for racial diversity is revealed through organizational outputs (e.g., demographic numbers, initiatives, policies, practices, retention rates), and work experiences. With respect to the relationship between diversity and organizational culture, DeSensi (1994) introduced three types of organizational cultures, characterizing stages of diversity management - (1) monocultural, (2) transitional, and (3) multicultural (DeSensi, 1994).

Monocultural organizations explicitly exclude diversity from all operations, often producing homogeneous outputs (e.g., staff, customers, membership). These organizations consist of homogenous leadership resistant to change, often facilitating acts

of discrimination and prejudice (DeSensi, 1994). *Transitional organizations* have optimistic diverse intentions but have not been attained through organizational practices (DeSensi, 1994). A *multicultural organization* achieves diversity through fostering equitable practices, resulting in diverse representation and an inclusive environment (DeSensi, 1994). In the sport industry, all three typologies exist however, monocultural and transitional cultures are prominent.

Through a similar approach, Doherty and Chelladurai's (1999) model of organizational culture introduced two expressions of diversity an organization's culture may reflect - similarity or diversity. A *culture of similarity* reflects DeSensi's (1994) monocultural organization in which the culture is homogenous, led by the belief system of a dominant group, ultimately fostering resistive and biased organizational practices (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). A *culture of diversity* (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999, p.287) reflects DeSensi's (1994) model of multiculturalism, which is undergirded by an appreciation of differences, revealed through equitable organizational practices. Ultimately, an organization's culture impacts recruitment, retention, job satisfaction, and overall performance of diverse personal cultures.

With respect to diverse recruitment and attraction, organizational culture has the tendency to influence organizational outputs (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Hindman & Walker, 2020; Schein, 2016). For example, organizational members often recruit and select individuals coinciding with the existing organizational culture (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999). Thus, organizational cultures of similarity are likely to make homogenous hiring decisions whereas, cultures of diversity are more apt to make

culturally diverse hires. Through experience of being associated with an organizational culture of similarity with homogenous outputs, the culture (re)produced inequity through their HR practices. Ultimately, organizational practices can create, promote, and reinforce a culture of similarity or diversity.

Throughout this section, personal culture and organizational culture have been identified as influential toward recruitment and selection practices. Thus, when an organization couples personal culture diversity with an organizational culture of diversity, the benefits to diversity are inherent. However, without cultures of diversity, an organization cannot fully access the benefits of personal culture diversity due to forms of exclusion (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Lee & Cunningham, 2019).

The Lack of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Sport Organizations

The sport industry is widely known as a heterosexual, white, male dominated field marked by its lack of diversity in leadership, resulting in the marginalization and exclusion of multiple identities. Due to the homogeneity within the sport industry, diversity with respect to race, gender, and sexuality are prominent areas within sport literature. This research reveals people of color, women, the LGBTQI+ community, and those with intersecting marginalized identities (e.g., black women) are underrepresented in sport organizations, often experiencing marginalization and exclusion.

Because numerous sport organizations are run by heterosexual White males, this demographic heavily influences hiring and retention practices (Cunningham, 2019; Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; O'Boyle 2015). Within sport scholarship, practices of dominant-group reproduction, including homophily, social similarity, and homologous

reproduction, have been identified as prevalent (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999).

Coincidentally, demographic data indicates the underrepresentation of racial (and gender) minorities in major professional sport leagues and governing bodies on all organizational levels (e.g., administrators, support staff, professional team staff, managerial staff, leadership) (TIDES, 2021).

This “Anglocentric flavor” (Armstrong, 2011, p.99) interwoven through the fabric of sport organizations is apparent through racially disproportionate demographic data and scholarship inferring racial inequity persists through forms of exclusion and closure (e.g., marginalization, homologous reproduction) (O’Boyle, 2015). For instance, when racial minorities are situated in sport organizations, they are placed in low performing roles, given limited autonomy and resources, ultimately set up for underperforming and career penalizations (Ashby et.al, 2007; Cook & Glass, 2013). This macro culture of similarity is detrimental toward racial minority groups, as it (re)produces inequity through practices infiltrated with exclusion, closure, marginalization, discrimination, and prejudice (Hoerber, 2007).

Exclusionary practices (e.g., lack of access, differential treatment, hostile environments) are prevalent in cultures of similarity and monocultural organizations as they create barriers to entry, retention, advancement, and satisfaction for diverse cultural groups (Ferdman & Deane, 2013). Whereas multicultural organizational practices promote cultures of diversity through valuing difference, fostering open communication systems and inclusive decision making across organizational levels, and cultural competency (Doherty & Chelladurai 1999). Because many major professional sport

organizations are racially homogenous, they are more apt to reproduce racial inequities through their organizational culture.

Exclusion in Sport Organizations

The exclusion of cultural groups in sport, recreation, and leisure has a long history, as gender, race, social class, sexual orientation has been operationalized to deny access to sport participation. In ancient Greece, there was a penal death law forbidding women from athletic participation and observation (Kretchmar et al., 2018). The modern Olympic games were revived surrounding the socially acceptable amateur Greek male, overtly excluding women, the working class, and people of color (Boykoff, 2016). Before the 20th century, women were excluded from sport participation due to ideas such as the eternally wounded women myth - the belief that women's bodies are inherently weak and are ill-equipped to participate in sport (Vertinsky, 1990). A concrete example of gender exclusion is found in baseball as a policy explicitly excluding women from Little League participation was enforced until the mid-1970s (Love & Dzikus, 2013). Throughout the 20th century, many country clubs, golf clubs, and fitness centers were reserved for the White race to appease the majority (McLean et al., 2017). Further, policies of sex testing from the International Association of Athletics Federation in the 1960s, International Olympic Committee in 1968, United States Tennis Association in 1977, and the Stockholm Consensus in 2004, has explicitly excluded those with diverse gender and sexual orientation identities (Love & Dzikus, 2013).

Historically, these ideologies and policies have shifted primarily due to legal actions (McLean et al., 2017). For instance, Avery Brundage adjusted the modern

Olympics amateurism code in the mid-1900s due to scrutiny from the media and countries (Boykoff, 2016). In Baseball, the lawsuit on behalf of Maria Pepe signaled a change to include women in Little League Baseball (Love & Dzikus, 2013). Additionally, the ascent of sport sponsorships contributed to the assimilation of African Americans into leisure and recreation participation (Love & Dzikus, 2013).

Modern-day, cultural exclusion in sports persists through the form of the workplace. As aforementioned, demographic data of major sport leagues and governing bodies reveal the exclusion of cultural groups primarily by race, gender, and sexual orientation. Further, social exclusion in the workplace can manifest through organizational practices and individual interactions (O'Reilly & Banki, 2016). Correspondingly, studies by sport scholars investigating minority identities in sport organizations have identified women, people of color, the LGBTQ community, and those with marginalized intersectional identities as cultural groups primarily experiencing exclusionary practices (Brutschy & Zachary, 2014; Cunningham, 2019; Denison et al., 2020).

The phenom of exclusion as closure is a multi-dimensional DEI issue as cultural groups may be excluded through (a) a lack of representation or (b) socially, experiencing an outsider-within – included through representation, yet excluded by the dominant in-group – dynamic (Carter, 2003; Collins, 2000). Closure as a lack of representation has been theorized by various scholars, illuminating subtle ways minority groups are excluded institutionally. Conceptualized as a theory of discrimination, social closure is a process of social groups creating and reinforcing boundaries as a means of advantage to

exclude certain social groups from access, opportunities, and rewards (Albiston & Green, 2018; Parkin, 1974). This process of “exclusionary closure” (Albiston & Green, 2018, p.5) socially constructs certain social groups (e.g., races, genders, classes) as inferior to exert their power through exclusion (Albiston & Green, 2018). The idea of employing identity-based exclusionary practices is historic as Weber’s conceptualization of exclusion illuminates the ways certain races and genders were excluded in the labor market (Murphy, 1988). In response, Murphy (1988) charged sociologists to shed light on the “invisible hand” (p.99) – systemic exclusionary practices –, which the current study seeks to accomplish.

Modern-day, salient social groups experiencing exclusion are racial minorities, women, low social classes, and older individuals (Albiston & Green, 2018; Kidder, 2004; Roscigno et al., 2007). With respect to the workplace, legal precedent, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, prohibits workplace discrimination based on social identities. However, social closure theorists suggest discrimination covertly persists through forms of “individualized criteria” (Albiston & Green, 2018, p.8). Meaning, individualized criteria (e.g., requirements, criteria, recruitment) are presented as ostensibly neutral, yet contain implicit barriers designed to exclude certain groups from access and opportunities (Albiston & Green, 2018; Bills et al., 2017). For example, during the civil rights era, the job requirement of high school diplomas was operationalized as a form of closure, keeping Black people from attaining jobs (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). In relation to the current study, scholars assert that hiring practices are

vulnerable to forms of exclusion and closure due to the agency of hiring personnel (Bills et al., 2017). For example, scholars have identified racially discriminative candidate screening and recruiting through informal networks as forms of social closure, often working against racial minority groups (Bills et al., 2017). Thus, the current study will examine how the actions of hiring personnel work to shape the hiring practices, in which forms of closure could emerge.

Racial Exclusion in Sport Organizations: A Multi-level Approach

To further analyze the exclusion of cultural groups in organizations, scholars have employed multi-level approaches. Emerging in the 1950s is the idea of organizations as systems – interrelated parts constituting a whole – drawing from systems theory, interactionist theory, and organizational psychology (Klein et al., 2000). Klein and colleagues (2000) established organizations as multi-leveled entities, as they illuminated how multileveled frameworks should be theorized and applied in scholarship. As a result, several scholars across disciplines have created multileveled frameworks to explore organizational topics, including management information systems (Burton-Jones & Gallivan, 2007), leadership behaviors (Searle & Barbuto, 2013), organizational ambivalence (Ashforth et al., 2014), organizational resilience (Tasic et al., 2019), power in organizations (Wang & Polillo, 2016), police culture (Ingram et al., 2013), and diversity and inclusion in sport organizations (Cunningham, 2019).

In the field of sport management, Chelladurai (2017) identified sport organizations as systems encompassing individuals and groups. Because sport organizations are systems, scholars have introduced frameworks and theories explaining

how cultural exclusion is perpetuated and sustained in sport organizations. In relation to this study, Cunningham's (2019) multilevel model provides a framework to understand the ways inequity is (re)produced on multiple levels within sport organizations.

According to Cunningham's (2019) model, diversity and inclusion in sport organizations are influenced by factors operating on the micro-individual, meso-organizational, and macro-societal levels of analysis, ultimately affecting the opportunities and experiences of minorities in sport (Cunningham, 2019).

Micro, meso, and macro levels of analyses interact and can influence each other. For instance, existing scholarship has illuminated the influence of organizational cultures (meso) in (re)producing inequities throughout organizational levels (Cooper et al., 2020). However, the ways in which these factors operate on each level vary depending on cultural group (Cunningham, 2019). Specifically, race, gender, ability, weight, sexual orientation, social class, and religion are prevalent characteristics influencing diversity and inclusion in sport organizations, in which Cunningham's (2019) framework is oriented toward.

Employing a multi-level approach to DEI is integral in identifying inequities and improving organizational practices (Cooper et al., 2020). Thus, scholars have employed Cunningham's (2019) multi-level model to illuminate the ways in which inequity persists among LGBTQI+ participants, athletes, and employees in sport organizations (Cunningham, 2012), women in sport organizations (Cunningham et al., 2014), sexual orientation diversity in sport organizations (Cunningham, 2010), performance appraisal systems in intercollegiate athletics (Cunningham & Dixon, 2003), and the

underrepresentation of racial minorities in coaching and leadership positions (Cunningham, 2020). The remainder of this section describes how exclusion operates through micro, meso, and macro-level factors through a multi-level analysis. Given the scope of this study the discussion is restricted to race in an effort to illuminate how micro, meso, and macro-level factors affect their opportunities and experiences in sport.

The micro-level of analysis considers factors operating on the individual level contributing to inequities in sport, including personal background, identities, and “self-limiting behaviors” (Cunningham, 2019, p.81; Steward & Cunningham, 2015). Primary individual factors working to exclude racial minorities from access and opportunities in sport are related to social capital and identity (Cunningham, 2019). Regarding social capital, constructing a comprehensive network is challenging for racial minorities due to the prevalence of social similarity imposed by the majority (Cunningham, 2015). Further, White individuals often experience career advancement through their all-white networks while, racial minorities are tasked with creating multi-cultural networks yet, often excluded from influential groups (Bell & Nkomo, 1994; Cunningham, 2015). This form of inequity is manifested through the ways racial minorities are excluded from mentorship opportunities (Arthur et al., 1989; Harvey-Wingfield & Mickey, 2018). Further, perceptions of racial identities can influence hiring decisions. Previous research indicates how racial identification (e.g., racial identity, racialized affiliations) can produce access and treatment discrimination in sport (Bell & Nkomo, 1994; Cunningham, 2015, 2019; Steward & Cunningham, 2015).

Analyses conducted on the meso-level considers factors operating on the organizational level and how they affect cultural groups in an organizational context (Cunningham, 2019). Prevalent meso-level factors include leader biases, organizational cultures and organizational practices, as they have the ability to attract, retain, develop, and exclude certain cultural groups in sport organizations. For example, Acker (2006) identified internalized biases of decision-makers as contributory in creating exclusionary practices, resulting in disproportionate personnel decisions (Acker, 2006; Cunningham, 2019). Further, stigma theory, self-categorization theory, and social identity theory illuminates how individual perceptions of certain cultures affect hiring decisions. Thus, organizational practices infiltrated with access and treatment discrimination often results in the underrepresentation of racial minorities and negative work experiences (Cunningham, 2019).

Factors influencing the macro-level of organizations are the interwoven practices presiding over institutions and societies, such as “discrimination, political climate, and stakeholder expectations” (Cunningham, 2019, p.79). Systems infiltrated with discrimination serve to exclude many cultural groups from access, opportunities, and in-group status (Cunningham, 2019). Further, research reveals that attitudes toward diversity and inclusion are correlated with political ideology, which serves as a presiding factor influencing organizational systems (Cunningham, 2019). Unique to sport organizations is the depth and breadth of stakeholders, including athletes, coaches, parents, fans, volunteers, members, boards, and donors. For instance, due to stakeholders’ influence over organizational practices in nonprofit organizations, board members’ homogenous

beliefs can influence hiring decisions by marginalizing racial minority identities (Cunningham, 2019).

Institutional racism is another dominant macro-level factor affecting racial minorities in the sport industry. Specifically, racism as an institutionalized practice has been identified as embedded into organizational systems, working to privilege whiteness (Hylton, 2010; Singer et al., 2010). For instance, the underrepresentation of racial minorities as NFL head coaches and the underrepresentation of minorities in leadership positions are direct manifestations of institutionalized racism working to exclude certain cultural groups (Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010; Bradbury, 2013).

Regarding political climate, the re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement revealed political ideologies presiding over the National Football League (NFL), Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Specifically, their policies, procedures, and processes reflected overt opposition toward racialized social justice movements, ultimately reflecting monoculturalism and a culture of similarity (DeSensi, 1994; Doherty, 1999). In turn, these hostile political climates have heavily affected the opportunities and advancement of racial minorities in sport organizations (e.g., Colin Kaepernick, Jemele Hill). With respect to hiring, a critical consideration is how institutional factors such as political climate may influence their applicant pool.

This exclusion section has illuminated the various ways sport organizations perpetuate inequalities, inequities, and exclusionary practices (Cooper, 2020; Singer, 2005). Specifically, identity, attitudes, stereotypes, social capital, bias, organizational

culture, institutionalized racism, and political ideology, were identified as prevalent micro, meso, and macro-level factors operating in sport organizations to marginalize and exclude racial minority groups. These exclusionary practices identified throughout literature provide contextual background for the ways in which organizational practices (e.g., hiring practices) may (re)produce racial inequities.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework encompasses a set of theories that frames a study (Crotty, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specifically, a theoretical framework represents the cognitive foundation of a study, characterizing the problem, purpose, and methodological approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When constructing a theoretical framework, it is essential to select theories aligning with the research area (e.g., sociology, human resource management, cultural studies, sport management), the topic of inquiry, and research questions. With respect to the current study interested in the (re)production of racial inequities within hiring practices, the researcher must consider theories deriving from HRM, sociology, and sport studies. In an effort to become theoretically knowledgeable and create a multi-faceted theoretical framework, researchers are tasked with sojourning through the related literature to identify applicable theories that will aid in the knowledge construction process (Mertz & Anfara, 2014). In turn, I reviewed theories from various disciplines, including economics, sociology, psychology, sport, diversity, and management, relative to its potential application to this study. Considering the limitations of some HRM and sport-related theories, Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations and structuration theory were selected as core

theories to anchor the current study. The remainder of this section expounds upon the chosen theories, illuminating their applicability in sport research and this study.

Structuration Theory

Drawing from sociology, Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration suggests social structures are reproduced through the concept of "duality of structure" (p.25). This idea refers to the interrelated relationship between agency and structure (Giddens, 1984). Specifically, individual actions within a group create social structures, and these structures guide the actions and behaviors of individuals (Giddens, 1984). Meaning, when social systems are reproduced, individual actions and structures are dually responsible (Giddens, 1984). In relation to hiring practices, hiring personnel and organizational structures work symbiotically because individual actions (e.g., cognitive processes) shape organizational practices, ultimately dictating hiring decisions (Hylton, 2018; Kmec, 2006). Further, because the structures influence individual actions, individual actions can maintain, reproduce, and change those structures (Giddens, 1984).

According to Giddens' (1984) theory, structures guiding actions contain rules (e.g., parameters guiding actions) and resources (e.g., monetary, authority figure) (Giddens, 1984). In the context of organizations, structures (e.g., containing organizational cultures and power relations) guide individual actions, ultimately serving to reproduce and institutionalize practices (Mierlo et al., 2018). Thus, when individuals act based on rules and resources (e.g., organizational norms, culture, power), the status quo is reproduced. However, when individuals resist and act counter to those rules, the structure can be challenged (Jarzabkowski, 2008). In the current study, structuration

theory serves to prioritize the duality of structure, how hiring practices are (re)produced by hiring personnel, ultimately addressing both research questions. Regarding the interview protocol, structuration theory is captured through all of the interview questions as they provide insight into individual perceptions of hiring practices.

Giddens' (1984) structuration theory provides a useful framework to explain how social structures are reproduced over time and how these social structures may reproduce inequity within organizations. In sport research, structuration theory has been applied in various ways. For example, Ogden and Rose (2005) employed structuration theory to contextualize the decline of African-American interest in baseball over time, finding that baseball's historic dominance was reproduced due to the routines, identity, and culture among the African-American community (Ogden & Rose, 2005). However, with the end of the Negro League, African Americans reoriented themselves around the routines, identity, and culture associated with basketball (Ogden & Rose, 2005). Bell and colleagues (2020) contributed to the literature by focusing on soccer league partisanship and how a campaign designed to address discriminative fan behavior impacted behaviors over time. The researchers concluded that the league's policies and efforts should reorient toward supporting fan activism (Bell et al., 2020). Similar to existing sport scholarship, this study employs components of structuration theory to illuminate the relationship between HRM practices and individual actions, and their role in (re)producing inequities.

Race and Racialized Organizations

To theorize race and explicate the role of race in society, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a prominent framework employed by scholars. In an organizational context,

CRT can contextualize how individuals and structures (re)produce racial inequity. Relevant to the theoretical orientation of this study are CRT's ideas of race as a social construct (i.e., the "Social Construction" thesis), racism being a normative feature of society (i.e., "Ordinariness"), and rejecting the liberal stance toward equality, race-neutrality, color-blindness, and affirmative action (i.e. "the critique of liberalism") (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Hylton, 2010).

Because the social construction of race has deemed Whiteness as property privileging them in society and the law, this racial order impacts the workplace (Bell, 1995; Harris, 1993). In work organizations, the social construction of the prototypical leader as White works against people of color, often experiencing barriers to career entry and development (Gündemir et al., 2014). In sport organizations, such career mobility challenges are evidenced through demographic data revealing the ongoing overrepresentation of White men in leadership and the marginalization of people of color on various organizational levels. Thus, biases from leadership has institutionalized the ordinariness of racist practices, yielding attention toward hiring practices (Acker, 2006).

Racism in organizations can also be (re)produced through the prominent racial ideologies of liberalism, color-blindness and race-neutrality because color-blind and race-neutral practices operate as racialized with racialized outcomes (Rondini, 2021). For example, the lack of attention to institutionalized challenges and barriers affecting people of color in the hiring process can produce homogenous results, facilitating the reproduction of the status quo. These core race-related ideas are fundamental to Ray's

(2019a) theory of racialized organizations, which provides important theoretical guidance for the current study.

As organizational scholarship conceptualizes organizations as race-neutral, Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations conceptualizes organizational structures (e.g., policies, processes) as fundamental in constructing racial inequities. According to Ray (2019a), organizations operate as racialized because racial schemas – mental frameworks filtering one's thoughts regarding race – (e.g., racial superiority, racial biases, racial exclusion, racial segregation) affect organizational structures primarily due to their connectedness to organizational resources. This “schema-resource coupling” (Ray, 2019a, p.2) – racial schema of racial superiority connected to organizational resources – produces institutionalized racial ideologies. Thus, racialized organizations are defined as organizational structures that enhance the agency of majority racial groups while diminishing the agency of minority racial groups (Ray, 2019a). So, when analyzing racial inequity within organizational structures, amplifying organizational factors are central in identifying inequity reproduction (Ray, 2019a).

Consequently, Ray's (2019a) theory introduces four tenets characterizing the schema-resource coupling, including “racialized organizations enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups”, “racialized organizations legitimate the unequal distribution of resources,” “Whiteness is a credential, and “decoupling is racialized” (p.36). Ray's (2019a) theory can be operationalized to analyze organizational structures through multiple tenets. For instance, Gardner, Love, and Waller (forthcoming) employed the “decoupling is racialized” tenet to illuminate how sporting leagues use demographic data

reporting tools to obscure existing racial inequity. In the current study, the third tenant, “whiteness is a credential,” can illuminate how hiring-related credentials (e.g., job requirements) may operate as racialized, ultimately impacting the organizational hierarchy (Ray, 2019a, p.36).

According to Ray (2019a), the racialization of credentials privileging Whiteness allows ostensibly race-neutral processes (e.g., hiring procedures) to produce exclusive access and ultimately disproportionate organizational hierarchies. For example, hiring practices may be presented as race-neutral yet covertly oriented toward Whiteness, facilitating a racialized process privileging Whiteness. In reference to the schema-resource coupling, because racial schemas of racial discrimination and exclusion are connected to organizational resources through decision-making and hiring processes, racial inequities constrict the agency of racial minorities (Ray, 2019a).

The role of Ray’s (2019a) theory in the current study is to address research question #2, as it considers the influence of race on the hiring practices. The race related interview questions (3-9) obtaining individual perceptions of the relevance of race provides insight into the racialization of practices, ultimately illuminating the schema-resource coupling. Further, through centering Whiteness as a credential, forms of White supremacy and the racialized effects on practices can be exposed (Hylton, 2018). Through a critical lens, the Whiteness as a credential tenet serves relevance to illuminate the primacy of Whiteness within hiring practices.

This emerging theory has yet to be contextualized in the sport literature. However, a few scholars across disciplines have employed Ray’s theory to identify meso-level

mechanisms of racism in medicine (Rondini et al., 2020) and the ways racial ideology influences organization practices in Brazil (Carrillo, 2020). Rondini and colleagues (2020) used Ray's (2019a) schema-resource coupling to identify the ways race is operationalized through medical practices. Through this analysis, color-blindness was identified as guiding medical decisions, evident through color-blind medicine perpetuating racial inequity (Rondini et al., 2020). Further, Carrillo's (2020) study built upon Ray's (2019a) theory by illustrating how color-blind and race-neutral organizational processes influence the distribution of organizational resources. Drawing from components of Ray's (2019a) theory, the current study can further develop this theory while adding to the sport, organizational, and HRM literature by illuminating how an organization may operate as racialized.

Chapter Summary

In summation, this review of literature demonstrates a necessity for research production in the area of hiring practices in sport organizations. As foundation, HRM literature provided insight into modern-day hiring practices and the ways inequities can manifest within HRM systems. Further, the DEI and race literature revealed the ways people of color are marginalized and excluded in sport organizations. Thus, this study aims to reveal possible contributory factors to ongoing inequity within hiring in the Olympic movement.

Despite historic disproportionate demographic data entailing the lack of people of color in sport organizations, minimal research has explored the hiring practices that may be contributing to this inequity. In response, the current study seeks to conduct an in-

depth investigation on an Olympic-level sport organization's hiring practices to learn about the ways in which they may (re)produce racial inequities. Based on the review of literature and theoretical framework, the following research questions will guide the current study:

Research Questions

RQ1: How does an Olympic-level sport organization conceptualize and describe its hiring practices?

RQ2: In what ways do organizational members perceive race as being relevant in hiring practices?

CHAPTER THREE

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

A research design is a “logical” (Yin, 2017, p.60) strategy or plan procedurally guiding inquiry and informing data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Thomas, 2015). The purpose of selecting a suitable design is to ensure the researcher effectively answers the research questions (Yin, 2017). In qualitative research, the philosophical underpinnings and purpose of the study inform the design selected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, a constructionist epistemology and critical theoretical orientation were adopted to explore the hiring practices of an underperforming organization using the case study design. Procedurally, this research design will be informed by Yin’s (2017) methods which provide a systematic blueprint for conducting case study research. In an effort to justify the research approach, this section describes the design selection process and case study characteristics, methodologists, and typologies.

To select a suitable design, this study adopted Yin’s (2017) procedures of considering the (a) the research questions, (b) researcher control over the phenomena, and (c) whether the researcher is seeking to explicate a historical or current issue (Yin, 2017). First, the research questions were classified as “who, what, where, how, or why” questions (Yin, 2017, p.40). Research question #1, ‘How does (name of organization) conceptualize and describe their hiring practices?’, is an explanatory *how* question seeking an explanation and description of the hiring practices. Research question #2: ‘In what ways may these hiring practices (re)produce racial inequity?’ is an exploratory *how*

question, exploring how racial inequities may be embedded in these hiring practices.

According to case study methodologists, case study designs are characterized by *how* and *why* questions due to their in-depth nature (Thomas, 2015; Yin, 2017).

Case study designs are further identified as appropriate when the topic of study involves the convergence of history and reality (Thomas, 2015; Yin, 2017). In relation to this study, the *historic hiring patterns inform the modern-day hiring challenge*.

According to Yin (2017), case studies specialize in investigating contemporary issues.

Further aligning with the essence of case study research, *the researcher has no control over the case – hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization*.

Thus, based on Yin's (2017) procedures, the research questions and nature of this study aligns with the case study design.

Case Study Design

“Case study” has been conceptualized as an approach, inquiry, strategy, topic of study, and a methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2015; Yin, 2017). From the standpoint of methodology, Robert Yin (2009, 2017), Sharan Merriam (1988), and Robert Stake (1995) are the core methodologists in case study research, yielding distinct philosophical, definitional, and procedural perspectives (Yazan, 2015). Philosophically, early “Yinian” (Yazan, 2015, p.137) work was oriented toward positivism, but his most recent scholarship embraces varying epistemological approaches, including constructionism and realism (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2017). Whereas, Stake (1998) and Merriam's (1988) approach is oriented toward constructionism.

Conceptually, the defining characteristics of case study research from a Yinian perspective include (a) the study is defined by a case, (b) contextualized by a real-life event, (c) using multiple sources of data, (d) researcher lacks autonomy over the subjects, and (e) research questions inquiring about the *how* and *why* (Yin, 2017). Stake (1995) characterizes a case as “specific,” “complex,” “functioning,” “integrated system” (p.2), which contains boundaries. Similarly, Merriam (1998) states that defining the case’s boundaries is the most prominent characteristic of case study research because if a ‘case’ lacks clear data collection parameters, it isn’t a ‘case’.

Across methodologists, the purpose of case study research is to obtain a holistic – complete – understanding of the case(s) within its context (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Yin, 2017). Similarly, a defining feature of case study research across approaches is the case being a “bounded system” and characterized by an individual, group, entity, process, practices, program, or policy (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017). Thus, case study research involves an “in-depth” investigation on a specific case(s) within a bounded system in its context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Bounded, being central in identifying a case, is defined as clear parameters surrounding what will and what will not be studied, ultimately limiting data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017). Aligning with the central features of case study research, this case study positions the contemporary issue of the hiring practices of an underperforming organization as the bounded system and case in an effort to obtain a holistic understanding of the organizations hiring practices. Thus, the boundedness of this case study is reflected through the case definition, *an*

underperforming Olympic-level sport organization, and the context, *hiring practices*, limiting data collection to one organizational component.

Procedurally, the core methodologists employ different approaches. For instance, each methodologist conceptualized varying typologies of the case study design, including intrinsic, instrumental, collective, holistic single-case, multi-case, exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive designs (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017). In relation to the current study, Yin's (2017) holistic single-case design will be adopted because the case definition – the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization – contains one unit of analysis. Thus, characterized by a case and its context, the holistic single case design situates the hiring practices to be explored within its bounded system (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Rowley, 2002; Yin, 2017).

Case study research has a rich intellectual tradition in the fields of anthropology, education, law, psychology, medicine, and sociology, producing case law, reports, history, and analyses (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Merriam, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Platt, 1992). Within the context of contemporary organizations, the case study method has been utilized to assess business challenges due to its practical and problem-solving nature (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In human resource management, scholars have employed the case study design when investigating topics including, human resource management strategies (Chew & Horwitz, 2004), culture matching in hiring at elite firms (Rivera, 2012), ethical decision making in hiring decisions (Fujimoto, 2012), and diverse hiring (Kabadi, 2020). Research in sport has employed the case study design across a wide range of topics, including improving

practicum experiences in sport management (Sotiriadou, 2011), ticketing strategies in Major League Baseball (MLB) (Morse & McEvoy, 2014), fans interaction with the 2020 MLB season given the pandemic-driven delayed start (Goold et al., 2020), salary distribution and collective bargaining agreement in National Basketball Association (NBA) (Hill & Jolly, 2012), concussions in the National Football League (NFL) and institutional change (Heinze & Lu, 2017), sponsorships in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) football bowl games (Jensen & Caneja, 2018), and Olympic sponsorships (Kang & Stotlar, 2011). Further, sociological scholar Barbara F. Reskin (2000) identified the case study method as suitable in examining racial inequalities in organizations due to its in-depth, replicable, and comparative nature. Building upon this foundation, this study will add to HRM, sociology, and sport literature by employing the case study design to explore the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization to characterize the ways in which their hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity.

Methods

Before Data Collection

Before data collection, Yin (2017) recommends the researcher engage in preparative procedures including a researcher skills assessment and training, constructing a protocol, screen potential candidates, and conduct a pilot study. In response, the researcher employed a portion of these strategies. In relation to skills, Yin (2017) recommends researchers “ask good questions” (p.119), listen well, be willing to adapt, proficient in the subject matter, and conduct ethical research. The researcher identified

proficiency in all of these items through conducting previous studies using varying data collection methods, completing a thorough literature review on the subject matter, constructing interview questions using varying strategies, and experience with the IRB process and additional ethical strategies (e.g., pseudonyms, member checks, reflexivity, bracketing).

In reference to training, the comprehensive examination and proposal period required the researcher to conduct conceptual, theoretical, and methodology sections to proactively identify flaws within the study (e.g., methodology, design, research questions, timeline, etc.) in collaboration with a methodology expert (Yin, 2017). In relation to data collection, a interview protocol encapsulating the interview procedures and interview questions was developed (see Figure I.) (Yin, 2017). To screen potential candidates and select a final case, the researcher followed Yin's (2017) "one-phased" (p.146) strategy by leveraging the key USOPC gatekeeper to gauge organizational interest about the desire to learn more about their DEI challenges.

Sampling: Case and Participant

In this holistic-single case design, case and participant selection was *purposeful* – selecting entities aligning with the purpose of the study and research questions – coinciding with the inclusion and exclusion criteria to identify entities aligning with the case (Emmel, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2007; Stake, 2008; Tongco, 2007). Specifically, in an effort to locate an underperforming organization, inclusion criteria consisted of all organizations that have perpetually failed to reach the people of color in front office staff benchmark of 25.21% during 2013-20. In turn, the exclusion criteria

included all organizations that met their people of color benchmark of 25.21% at least once throughout 2013-20. Through operationalizing these criteria, 55 organizations were narrowed down to 30 potential organizations on which to focus the study. These 30 organizations were further reduced to 11 through considering organizational size relative to the potential breadth and depth of the findings. Specifically, the inclusion criteria of all organizations with ten or more professional staff members and exclusion criteria of all organizations with ten or less professional staff members was employed due to the potential lack of available participants and data. Based on the 11 remaining organizations, *one* final case was selected based on researcher access and organizational willingness. Ultimately, the final case definition – an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization – encapsulates an object, analytic focus, and boundness (Thomas, 2015). In efforts to avoid a common pitfall in case study research – improperly identifying and defining the case – the researcher spoke with their USOPC key gatekeeper and dissertation committee members to confirm the selection as appropriate (Yin, 2017).

The researcher's key USOPC gatekeeper derives from the researcher's personal contacts, which set-up an initial email communication system between the 11 targeted organization's DEI or HRM personnel and the researcher to discuss DEI within their organization and their potential interest in placing a lens on their hiring practices. The final case was formally recruited and selected by contacting organizational personnel based on perceived interest.

In turn, *Team A* was selected as the final case and the Director of Human Resources, *Frank*, adopted the role of the key organizational gatekeeper, providing access

to potential interviewees and documents following IRB approval (see Appendix 1) and organizational consent. Frank also created the organizational pseudonym, *Team A*. To contextualize the case and outline their current challenge in fostering a racially diverse staff, historical background, DEI efforts, and demographic data are provided.

Case: Team A

Team A is an NGB running a winter sport with a rich tradition of over 100 years, responsible for over 33,000 stakeholders and seven teams, including athletes, coaches, members, committees, board of directors, and professional staff (USOPC, 2021). Considering professional staff, Team A has eight primary departments related to athletics, information technology (IT), events, finance, foundation, high performance, human resources (HR), and marketing. Team A's headquarters is located in the southwest United States amongst a predominately White population and liberal political climate. Coinciding with the USOPC's goals toward DEI, Team A aims to provide a culture that fosters a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community.

With respect to DEI, Team A presents a commitment through their DEI webpage offering core DEI principles and statements, DEI committee and action plan, and DEI-oriented initiatives. In fact, following the racially motivated events occurring in 2020, the President and CEO of Team A published a letter to their stakeholders acknowledging their organizational privilege and re-committing to serving underrepresented groups within their community (e.g., people of color, disability). Further, in response to summer 2020, Team A hired two diversity consultants to facilitate organizational seminars.

However, through further analysis of Team A, historic and contemporary demographic data reveals a glaring organizational challenge, fostering a racially diverse staff.

Drawing from the USOPC DEI scorecards, Team A has not reached the 25.21% benchmark once throughout 2013-20. In fact, people of color have consistently constituted less than 2% of professional staff. With over 100 employees, the highest number of people of color cited as employed within this organization over this eight year span is four. Given the most recent report (2020), 2% (3 people) of professional staff were people of color and were 35 hires away from reaching the 25.21% benchmark. Through obtaining current demographics from the HR director, out of Team A's 178 person staff, 6 are of color (1 Black, 2 Latino, 3 multiracial). Drawing from Team A's staff demographics, an important observation regarding this data is staff fluctuation from year to year. For example, Team A's professional staff grew from 93 in 2018 to 171 in 2019. Considering this data was retrieved primarily from the USOPC scorecards, the timing of USOPC scorecards data collection and Team A's reported retention challenges are contributory factors. A detailed graph of Team A's professional staff demographic data is listed in appendix 13.

Given the unique context of Team A and their ongoing, extreme challenge of fostering a racially diverse staff, they are a viable case for this study. Thus, the researcher interviewed at least one individual meeting the inclusion criteria (see sampling: participants section) from the athletics, IT, events, finance, high-performance and HR departments to obtain balanced insight regarding Team A's hiring practices. Further,

hiring-related documents were obtained from organizational personnel and public sources (see appendix 6).

Sampling: Participants

The population for this study is employees within the case that are involved with the organization's hiring practices. Thus, the inclusion criteria of being involved with the organization's hiring practices and exclusion criteria of being uninvolved with the organization's hiring was employed to select suitable participants (Tongco, 2007).

Recruiting potential participants from each department included the organizational gatekeeper identifying and contacting hiring personnel from each department via email about their possible participation, CCing the researcher (see Appendix 2). If a potential participant sent a response demonstrating willingness to participate, the researcher sent the individual an informed consent form (see Appendix 3). If an individual consented to participate in the current study through returning a signed consent form to the researcher, two qualitative interviews were scheduled and/or access to the Google Drive document portal was provided.

Regarding those that were unresponsive, if a prospective participant did not respond to the initial email message within one week, the researcher sent two follow-up messages within the following two weeks inviting them to participate in the study. The first follow-up email was sent one week after the original email, while the second follow-up was sent one week after the first follow-up. Through this process, eight organizational personnel from six departments were responsive and demonstrated willingness to participate in the current study. Drawing from participant selected pseudonyms, the

participants of the current study were Frank (HR), Wolverine (IT), Stevie (High Performance), Falcon (Athletics), Snowshoes (Finance), SB (Events), Fred (Athletics & High Performance), and Spector (High Performance) (see appendix 4).

Participant 1: Frank, the researcher's key gatekeeper, identifies as a White male working in Team A's Human Resources department as the "Director of Human Resources." Despite *Frank's* appointment being less than a year, he has already served as the hiring manager for at least five hiring processes throughout the organization.

Participant 2: Wolverine identifies as a White male working in Team A's information technology (IT) department as the "Chief Technology Officer." *Wolverine* has been employed within Team A for 3.5 years and has primarily served as the hiring manager for three hiring processes within the IT department.

Participant 3: Stevie identifies as a White female working in Team A's high-performance department as the "Director of Sport Science ." *Stevie* has been employed within Team A for 16 years and has primarily served as the hiring manager for at least five hiring processes within the high-performance department.

Participant 4: Falcon identifies as a White male that currently works in Team A's athletic department as the "Program Director for Cross Country ." *Falcon* has been employed within Team A for 21 years and has served as a hiring manager or committee member for at least three hiring processes within the athletics department.

Participant 5: Snowshoes identifies as a White male that currently works in Team A's finance department as the "Financial Controller ." *Snowshoes* have been employed

within Team A for one year and have primarily served as the hiring manager for at least two hiring processes within the finance department.

Participant 6: SB identifies as a White male that currently works in Team A's events department as the "Senior Director of Events ."SB, the longest-tenured participant, has been employed within Team A for 26 years and has primarily served as the hiring manager for twelve hiring processes within the events department.

Participant 7: Fred identifies as a White male that has been employed by Team A for four years. Fred began in the athletics department as a coach and analyst. However, after one year in the athletics department, Fred transferred to the high-performance department and is currently the "Senior Manager of Performance and Data Analytics ."Fred has served as a hiring manager or committee member for at least three hiring processes within the high-performance department.

Participant 8: Spector identifies as a White male that currently works for Team A's high-performance department as the "High-Performance Manager." Spector has been employed within Team A for five years and has served as the hiring manager or committee member for at least eight hiring processes within the high-performance department.

Demonstrated through the participant profiles is diverse perspectives. First, participants' employment status within Team A ranges from a few months to 26 years. Next, all participants have served as the hiring manager, and three provides insight into the role of hiring committee members. Lastly, the participant's involvement in hiring ranges from two to twelve hiring processes.

Data Collection

To obtain a complete understanding of the case(s), this study selected interviews and documents (including archival records) as the most suitable methods because interviews provide specific, in-depth descriptors, and documents provided tangible insight into the hiring practices, constituting a comprehensive understanding of the case. Observations, a common practice in case study research, and artifacts, weren't selected because these methods provide insight into the organizational environment, interactions, behaviors, and culture, which is beyond the scope of this study. Given the dichotomy between individuals' perceptions and actual practices, interviews and documents will work concertedly to understand the holistic picture of hiring practices within the organization (Gillham, 2000). The data collection process occurred in late January through early March 2022.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted via the videoconferencing platform Zoom with organizational personnel involved with the organization's hiring practices. The interview participants were able to connect to the video calls from a location of their choosing. The audio portion of the interviews were recorded through Zoom's software and transcribed verbatim by the researcher with the assistance of the transcription software Otter.ai. The signed informed consent forms, interview recordings, and transcripts were stored on the university-provided Google Drive account of the researcher. Participants had the opportunity to select their own pseudonym during interview one, and review interview transcripts, make revisions for accuracy and clarity after both interviews were

transcribed. When the researcher-participant relationship required further attention after this process, communication was facilitated via email (i.e., clarification).

In pursuit of capturing enough data to the point where no new meanings emerge and obtaining rich descriptions, the researcher interviewed eight hiring personnel throughout six departments (Guest et al., 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These individuals were interviewed twice, with the first interview averaging 14 minutes and the second interview averaging 52 minutes. The first interview consisted of an introductory conversation in which the researcher thoroughly explained the nature of the study while gathering the participants' involvement with the organization's hiring practices (e.g., How do you identify your race and gender, What would you like your pseudonym to be? Can you describe your role within the organization?, In what ways have you been involved in your organization's hiring practices?). The second interview consisted of asking interview questions directly related to the study. Due to the specificity of the study, a semi-structured interview protocol was generated for the second interview based on a review of literature in an effort to promote comfortability and an open conversation. The core interview questions include 'Describe your complete hiring process from human resource planning to selection?' 'In what ways do you recruit?' 'In what ways do you screen applicants?' 'Can you describe your interview process?' 'In what ways do you assess and select candidates?' 'What contributory factors do you think are relevant to your organization's challenge of fostering a racially diverse staff?', 'Do you think the hiring practices may contribute to the lack of racial diversity within your organization?'. This interview data provided detailed perceptions regarding the hiring practices of an

Olympic-level organization and the relevance of race. The current study's entire interview protocol is provided in Appendix 5.

When considering the interview protocol, interview questions under section one (listed in appendix 5) sought to elicit responses pertaining to RQ1, while section two's questions (listed in appendix 5) encouraged participants to provide responses with respect to RQ2. Specifically, interview questions underneath section one explicitly explored the organization's hiring practices, which aided in developing an understanding of how the organization conceptualizes its hiring practices. Likewise, questions associated with section two ask multiple race-related questions, which provided insight regarding the relevance and influence of race on the organization's hiring practices. Ultimately, the interview questions align with the research questions and the purpose of the study.

Documents

Documents were selected to provide tangible insight into the hiring practices, serving to confirm, contradict, and draw new insight (Mills et al., 2012). The types of documents that were collected are archival records (historic staff demographics), current staff demographics, a demographic profile of the organizational hierarchy, a hiring best practices document, interview guides, testing and evaluation documents, and job postings with job descriptions, with a total of 15 documents. Regarding archival records, demographic data detailing the organization's demographic makeup during 2013-20 was retrieved by the researcher from an online medium. The organizational gatekeeper and participants provided further researcher access to the remaining internal documents using

a shared Google Drive folder, revoking access once the research cycle was complete. A complete list of the documents obtained for the current study is located in Appendix 6.

Case Database

To organize and store case study data and reports, Yin (2017) recommends researchers create a “case study database” (p.175). In this study, Google Drive served as the case database storing all data (Yin, 2017; Stake, 1995). Specifically, informed consent forms, audio recordings, transcripts, documents, archival documents, and write-up reports were stored on the researcher's university-provided Google Drive account. NVivo software facilitated the data analysis process, and Microsoft Excel served as the codebook holding all codes, themes, and categories. Lastly, the researcher maintained a “chain of evidence” (Yin, 2017, p.181) to illuminate the interconnectedness between the research questions, data, findings, and conceptual and theoretical implications. In result, the findings can be traced back to the data and research questions (Yin, 2017).

Data Analysis

Continuing with the inductive nature of qualitative research, the raw data was analyzed to develop codes, categories, and themes associated with the hiring practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The case study design provided a richness through triangulating interviews and documents to describe the phenomenon. Data collection and analysis converged through developing analytic memos and preliminary codes during data collection. However, major findings were solidified once data collection concluded.

Interviews

The interview data was transcribed verbatim individually using Otter.ai software. Once each transcription was complete, the researcher employed the member checking technique by contacting the participants via email to verify transcription accuracy within one week. After that one-week span, the transcriptions were imported into NVivo 12 software to facilitate data analysis.

Data analysis of interviews consisted of reviewing interview transcripts throughout multiple coding cycles. Drawing from Saldaña's (2021) data analysis methods, this study employed two cycles of coding in an effort to facilitate a process of "recoding" (p.15). To capture the essence of the study, the first cycle of coding utilized multiple techniques oriented toward analyzing interview transcripts including structural coding, In Vivo coding, and evaluation coding (Saldaña, 2021).

Structural coding is designed to code interview data relative to the interview questions (Saldaña, 2021). For example, when coding segments of data addressing the interview questions, 'What is the process for creating job descriptions?', "In what ways do you recruit?", 'How do you screen applicants?', 'In what ways do you test applicants?', 'In what ways do you select candidates?', structural coding informed the researcher to insightfully code fragments of data under related phrases including *job description and posting strategies, recruitment strategies, screening strategies, testing strategies, and selection strategies* (Saldaña, 2021). Coinciding with this approach, In Vivo coding sensitizes the researcher to the participants voice by extracting direct meanings from interview transcripts as codes (Saldaña, 2021). For example, drawing

from interview transcripts, 22 excerpts were coded under job description and posting strategies, 24 were listed under attraction and recruitment strategies, 22 were identified as screening practices, 35 as testing practices, and 33 as selection practices. Structural and In Vivo coding were particularly beneficial for this study due to its open-ended yet focused approach of identifying relevant data within the dataset. Further, these direct quotations from interview transcripts were placed in a codebook so codes, categories and themes were participant generated rather than researcher generated (located in Appendix 10). This is evident through the final themes as four out of the six theme names capture participants voices (e.g., “Moving Target”, “Minimal”, “Familiar”, “Fit”).

Further, evaluation coding was employed in the first coding cycle to critically position the hiring practices with respect to race. Evaluation coding is critically oriented, directing the researcher to criticize organizational processes in an effort to provide recommendations (Saldaña, 2021). For example, when asking participants about the ways race is considered in hiring practices, if a participant stated race isn’t considered in hiring, evaluation coding allowed the researcher to code that response through a critical lens. Through employing evaluation coding, research question #2 was prioritized, allowing the researcher to identify data with respect to race and racial inequity, ultimately indicating 44 excerpts as such. With the first cycle consisting of structural, In Vivo, and evaluation coding, 180 codes were generated in NVivo (located in Appendix 8).

To categorize the data, codes were placed in a codebook in Microsoft Excel, in which the researcher sought to *synthesize* the data through *lumping* – one category capturing the essence of each excerpt –, and consolidating meanings (Saldaña, 2021).

For example, when many participants listed varying job posting websites as recruitment strategies, the researcher categorized that insight as “job posting websites.” Through this process, 40 categories were identified (listed in Appendix 10).

In an effort to turn the codes and categories into solidified themes, the second coding cycle employed the focused coding technique to identify “the most salient and significant categories” (Saldaña, 2021, p.302). For example, with multiple categories oriented toward “interviews,” the researcher identified it as a salient category. To thematize these salient categories, the researcher used the thematic analysis technique to construct “extended thematic statements” (Saldaña, 2021, p.259) reflecting the essence of participant meanings. For example, categories related to participants perceptions of the relevance of race consisted of “no race-related conversations”, “no race related considerations”, “race is unrelated to hiring,” leading the researcher to thematize these categories as “The Irrelevance of Race in Hiring”. After engaging in these two cycles of coding, the raw data transitioned from codes, into categories, and ultimately six themes (located in Appendix 9) that explicitly addressed the research questions. Drawing from the codebook, an example of this codes to categories to themes process is located in Appendix 10.

Documents

To gather a holistic understanding of the hiring practices and triangulate the data, documents were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis procedures in search for confirming, contradicting, and emerging insight in relation to the study (Bowen, 2009). Thematic analysis was selected due to its iterative and reflective nature,

and its ability to “identify, analyze, and report themes within data”, promoting triangulation (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). Within thematic analysis, the researcher identified prominent data aligning with the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Procedurally, thematic analysis includes an iterative process of “(1) familiarizing yourself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87).

From the current study’s standpoint, the researcher immersed themselves in the document data over a week span. The following week, the document data was coded in the codebook in search of insight related to the ways Team A operationalizes their hiring practices. Specifically, the researcher analyzed the best practices guide for hiring document, job description template, job descriptions, candidate screening tool, interview guide, DEI statement, and DEI action plan in search for data providing insight into Team A’s hiring practices, landing on eight initial codes. Then, through reflection, the codes were thematized, defined, and named through identifying extended thematic statements encapsulating the essence of meanings/ For example, Team A’s “DEI statement” and “DEI action plan” failed to address race so, the researcher generated the theme “Ignorance of Race.” Ultimately, three themes were constructed from documents, in which was triangulated with interview data. Drawing from the codebook, an example of this document thematic analysis process is located in Appendix 11.

Triangulation

To develop a comprehensive understanding of Team A's hiring practices, the current case study used multiple data collection tools, interviews and documents. Considering the convergence of differing data sources, the researcher compared the interview themes with the document themes in the codebook. Through this process, the researcher found that the document data primarily confirmed interview insight, ultimately substantiating the six themes. In other words, through triangulating interview data with document data, themes generated from the interviews were further confirmed, providing greater richness into the themes. Drawing from the codebook, an example of triangulating interview themes with document themes is listed in Appendix 12.

Data Saturation

The researcher recognized they reached the point of data saturation based on the criteria of "informational redundancy" (Alam, 2021, p.7). In the current study, interviews became redundant by interviewee four as interviewees four through eight (e.g., SB, Snowshoes, Falcon, Fred, Spector) provided similar insight as previous respondents and documents, with no new meanings or themes emerging (Sandelowski, 2008, p.875). Further, triangulating interview data with documents promotes data saturation. For example, in the current study, documents primarily confirmed interview data and themes. Data collection was discontinued when the researcher reached confidence that themes were fully saturated with richness (Saunders et al., 2017).

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, methodological strategies of triangulation, member checking, analytic memos, purposive sampling, and providing rich descriptions were employed throughout multiple stages within the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Noble & Smith, 2015).

- *Triangulation*: To obtain a complete understanding of the case, case study methods promote triangulation by employing multiple data collection tools, including documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations, each yielding distinct benefits (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gillham, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Thomas, 2015; Yin, 2017). To promote the credibility of the findings, this study used interviews and documents. The practice of triangulating data was beneficial in this study as individual perceptions, and organizational documents provided a comprehensive understanding of the organization's hiring practices.
- *Member checking*: Member checking is the process of allowing participants to verify data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In this study, member checking was employed to ensure the accuracy of the interview transcripts. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher emailed the participants to verify transcription accuracy within one week. Through member checking, the researcher went back to the data sources to confirm data accuracy before data analysis.
- *Analytic Memos*: Analytic memos are reflective in nature and particularly helpful for the data analysis process because one of their functions allows the researcher to reflect on the data (Saldaña, 2021). In this study, analytic memos were utilized

to reflect on the coding processes to maintain a chain of evidence regarding code choices and the final report (Yin, 2017).

In quantitative research, the accuracy of the findings is based on validity and reliability in hopes that the data will make generalizations (Connelly, 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Whereas, in qualitative research, the researcher seeks to demonstrate trustworthiness, credibility, and rigor to illuminate its transferability across contexts (Connelly, 2016). To promote transferability, the researcher selected participants purposefully and obtained in-depth descriptors of the case to properly contextualize the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Tracy, 2010). Further, the data analysis and write-up processes drew from literature and theory to interpret the findings. Ultimately, through this study, the reader had the opportunity to learn about how a phenomenon may manifest in a specific context. The data analysis process concluded in March 2022.

Subjectivity Statement

Due to the underlying characteristics and nature of qualitative research, the researcher must address the integrity of the study (Gergen, 2000). Further, case study scholars have identified the researcher's responsibility to (a) monitor bias, (b) maintain honesty, professionalism, and credibility, and (c) protect the case and all participants (Yin, 2017). Because the philosophical belief system of this study positions the researcher as a co-constructer of knowledge, the researcher was reflexive through journaling to remain mindful of biases during the research process.

The insider-outsider positionality of the researcher – a Black woman that has worked within the Olympic movement, experiencing and observing racial inequities –

informs this study in numerous ways. Specifically, its value lies in inciting this inquiry, providing insider knowledge about the Olympic movement and access to key gatekeepers. However, the researcher was intentional in preventing internal biases from manipulating data collection and analysis. For example, the researcher promoted reflexivity by notetaking during interviews, journaling after every interview, and constructing detailed analytic memos throughout data analysis (Bogden & Biklen, 2012; Saldaña, 2021). Through the aforementioned processes of self-reflection and strategies toward confidentiality and trustworthiness, the researcher's positionality and subjectivities didn't detrimentally affect the findings, and the ethical standards of the study was maintained.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 addressed the selected methodology of case study, and methods that will be used for case and participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Considering the integrity of the study, the researcher provided a discussion of their positionality through a subjectivity statement and provided strategies that will be employed toward trustworthiness. Chapter 4 presents the findings aligning with the research questions. Lastly, Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings, conclusions, recommendations, implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this holistic-single case study was to seek an understanding of the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization and the ways in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity. Chapter 1 provided a comprehensive background of the study, illuminating the literature gap and the need for the current study. The second chapter provided an overview of literature relevant to hiring practices, racial inequity, and the theoretical orientation of the current study. Then, Chapter 3 addressed the case study methodology and the methods employed for the study. The purpose of this chapter is to report notable findings from interviews and documents aligning with the research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How does an Olympic-level sport organization conceptualize and describe its hiring practices?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): In what ways do organizational members perceive race as being relevant in hiring practices?

Findings

The research goal was to identify salient themes addressing the research questions throughout data analysis. By analyzing 16 interviews from eight participants – Wolverine (IT), Stevie (High Performance), Frank (HR), Falcon (Athletics), Snowshoes (Finance), SB (Events), Fred (Athletics & High Performance), Spector (High Performance) – and 15 documents, the researcher obtained an understanding of Team A's hiring practices and

the perceived relevance of race in hiring practices. With data analysis oriented toward triangulation, the interviews provided tangible insight into participants' perceptions of Team A's hiring practices, while the documents promoted trustworthiness, credibility, and rigor by providing emerging, confirming, or contradicting insight. Because the researcher retrieved most of the documents from public mediums and the first interviewee, Frank, when relevant, the researcher queried participants regarding document data to promote triangulation. In short, interview and document data converged, which is evident through the findings.

Through employing two coding cycles, the researcher reached a consensus of six major themes and three subthemes addressing the ways organizational members and documents detailed Team A's hiring practices. Common descriptors used by participants to conceptualize Team A's hiring practices were "traditional," "standard," "basic," "reactive," and "rushed." For example, after Frank indicated Team A's hiring practices are "traditional", he further stated, "We're always in a rush. Once we find out someone's going to leave... we're always reactive... we need to get someone as quick as possible."

With respect to the hiring process, all participants monolithically outlined the procedural components of their hiring practices. At the same time, documents confirmed this data, suggesting Team A's hiring process consists of (1) constructing job descriptions and postings, (2) posting the job, (3) screening, (4) testing, and (5) selection. However, through analyzing participants' perceptions and coinciding document data, the ways Team A operationalizes their hiring practices within each procedural component yield unique insight with respect to the way Team A operationalizes their hiring practices.

Drawing from participant perceptions and documents, primary thematic areas drew from components of the hiring process, including job description and posting creation being a (1) *“Moving Target,”* attraction and recruitment practices demonstrating a (2) *A Proclivity Toward “Familiar” Professional Networks*, the screening process being (3) *Unstructured*, interview practices contain (4) *Variation and Subjectivity*, and (5) *The Salience and Variability of “Fit”* during selection. Additionally, race-related data informed the theme, (6) *The Irrelevance of Race in Hiring*, and two subthemes, *Lack of Race-Related Conversations* and *“Minimal” Race-Related Practices*. As a starting point, the following content describes the ways interviews and documents described and conceptualized the major components of Team A’s hiring practices and the salient themes identified within them. Next, the researcher addresses the race-related themes, providing insight into the ways Team A perceives race as being relevant to hiring practices.

Hiring Process Step 1: Constructing Job Descriptions and Job Postings

Despite the current Director of Human Resources (HR), Frank, providing direction for creating job descriptions and posting content through (a) a hiring best practices document outlining the protocol for new or replacement positions and (b) a foundational template encompassing the components of job postings – job title, classification, location, travel, summary, roles and responsibilities, additional duties, essential functions, competencies and experience, supervisory responsibilities, physical requirements, and an Equal Employer Opportunity Statement –, contrary methods are employed. Participants attributed the variation in method to the high turnover rate within Team A’s HR department as SB stated “the longest tenure we’ve had for an HR director

is a couple years”. Wolverine expounded upon the ways this turnover influences job description and posting processes, “each person [HR director] just has a little bit different way of doing it [creating job description and posting content]. It has really kind of been a mess because it's been a *moving target*”. Considering the current HR director, Frank, has been situated in this role for less than a year, job description and posting content are created varying across Team A.

Theme 1: “Moving Target”

Frank presumed the systematic process for job description and posting content included departments using the template given and working with HR to tailor it to the position by stating: “I’ll build the foundation of a job description, then work with the hiring manager and making sure that we’re getting everything for all the positions”. However, many participants indicated they don’t collaborate with HR when creating job descriptions and posting content. Rather, the prominent practice for creating job descriptions and posting content is using self-induced strategies.

Because the format for creating job descriptions and postings continually changes, the autonomy of hiring managers was evident through document data revealing one out of four job postings (“human resource generalist”) followed the current job description template and posting format provided by Frank. Thus, participant insight expounded upon the varying methods employed. For example, SB and the individual hiring with him in the events department work symbiotically to reach a consensus regarding job descriptions and core competencies. Whereas Wolverine and Snowshoes processes are siloed, in which they create this content alone. For example, Snowshoes, a hiring

manager from the finance department, believes creating job descriptions is his responsibility because “many roles within my department lack detailed job description templates.” Continuing with the prominent practice of using self-induced strategies, Wolverine, a hiring manager from the IT department, conducts “google searches” to obtain job descriptions of similar positions and tailors them to his job requirements. On the contrary, Fred and Stevie described how this process is more collaborative in the high-performance department, “involving stakeholders” consisting of: “tearing them [previous job descriptions] apart and making sure that I’m adjusting for what our needs are going forward”. Despite Frank attempting to provide “some sort of consistency,” data suggested a variation in job description and posting content creation, in which Snowshoes ultimately believes “We [Team A] aren’t very good at job descriptions” because of this “moving target.”

Subtheme: Inconsistent Job Requirements

Despite variability in job posting creation, the researcher identified commonalities within the reviewed job postings. For instance, through analyzing postings for jobs located in IT, marketing, human resources, and events, they all included a detailed description of the role, the location situated at their headquarters, and requiring certain levels of education and years of experience. However, when triangulating this data with participant insight, inconsistencies were identified. For example, although every job posting expresses the job location is at their headquarters, Snowshoes stated that many active employees working in departments such as marketing and fundraising work remotely: “A lot of our people work remotely. A lot of our fundraising people are live in

New York or San Francisco. A lot of our marketing people live in Colorado or anywhere else.” Despite participants indicating many roles transitioned from in-person to remote due to the ongoing health crisis, participant insight suggests some of these emerging roles may initially begin remote.

Further, a core requirement or preference across all job postings reviewed included the “ability to perform” or an affinity toward the winter sport; however, participant insight negated the qualification. Using the “events administrative coordinator” job posting as an example, a participant in the events department, SB, indicated an affinity toward the sport is irrelevant for the role: “It’s an events coordinator position... so the skill sets we were looking for in this particular job were strong administrative skills, to be able to manage a high volume of data, good communication skills, and then prior event organization experience, didn't necessarily have to be in [the sport], but some level of event coordination management.” Through a macro-lens, Fred expounded on this further, “most roles [within Team A], frankly, don't need any prior experience [with the sport].” Ultimately, the identified instances in which job posting content were inconsistent with participant insight suggest a gap between formal structures and actual practices.

Hiring Process Step 2: Attraction & Recruitment

After creating job posting content, all participants indicated the next step is to post the job to attract and recruit candidates. Providing formal direction, the best practices document suggests jobs should be posted “internally and externally for at least a week” on their “ADP website,” the “USOPC career site,” “appropriate diversity job sites,” and

“relevant job boards for the position.” However, all participants suggested their attraction and recruitment strategies are limited to positioning jobs within familiar professional networks.

Theme 2: A Proclivity Toward “Familiar” Professional Networks

Despite HR’s goal of “casting the widest net” for every position, participant insight revealed that recruitment strategies are minimal, primarily dependent on job postings. Thus, the prominent job posting websites employed included (a) Team A’s website and USOPC Careers, (b) local media, colleges, and universities, (c) national networking sites including LinkedIn, Indeed, Monster, (d), and outdoor sports job posting sites (e.g., “Malakye”). With respect to casting the widest net, many participants believed national networking sites of LinkedIn and Indeed achieved this due to its ability to reach large amounts of job seekers. For example, Snowshoes stated “the bigger sites, Indeed and LinkedIn” were the most successful mediums in which they obtained applicants. Providing a specific example, Frank stated “ For the Chief Marketing Officer position, LinkedIn actually was probably the strongest source for candidates because when you post things on LinkedIn, you're getting candidates”.

To provide context for this theme, when discussing attraction and recruitment with SB, he indicated Team A tends to “rely on known networks,” which was evident through the prominent job posting mediums employed. Particularly, Team A posting jobs on their website, USOPC Careers, local media, and outdoor sports job sites, serves to attract and recruit applicants within their familiar professional networks and culture. To counter this proclivity, the “Best Practices for Hiring Managers” document directs

managers to post jobs on “appropriate diversity job sites,” yet no participants have posted jobs on such media.

Contributing further insight into the ways familiar professional networks are used as a recruitment strategy, Fred stated: “occasionally, we will also reach out to individuals that we feel would be good for the role.... it's generally been someone who someone's worked with previously, has been one of the interns, or someone who has applied previously.” This recruitment strategy was cited as a prominent practice in the athletics department as Fred recollected from his experience of hiring in his former coaching role in Team A: “On the sports side [athletics department] it has always been more of a who you know type situation... You're just not going to get a job unless you've had *familiarity*, you've been on development trips with the coaches who are hiring for those positions and I think that's okay. But you do need some pretty detailed level of understanding of these sports to coach the world's best athletes. So that's the sports side [athletics department] of it.” Currently serving as a program director in athletics, Falcon provided a recent example of recruiting for roles in which his department identified individuals from “within their community” that they “knew would be good for the role”. Moreover, Snowshoes, Fred, and Falcon indicated that “athlete to coach” is a “natural progression” within Team A. In fact, Falcon stated “It’s very rare that we get an applicant in our job searches where we don’t know who it is.”

In summation, Team A’s primary method for attracting and recruiting applicants include posting jobs on local, national, and winter sports websites. Additionally, some participants indicated the routine nature of reaching out to individuals within their

professional network to apply for roles. Given this insight, Team A has a proclivity toward attracting and recruiting candidates within their familiar professional networks.

Hiring Process Step 3: Screening

Once the job posting is closed, candidate applications are housed in Team A's Automatic Data Processing (ADP) applicant tracking system to facilitate candidate screening. Frank described his understanding of the screening process as beginning with him "assigning the hiring managers, and anyone who's involved with the hiring process for that position to have access to candidate information". Hiring committee members then obtain candidate information including demographics (e.g., gender, race, age, ability), experience, resume, cover letter, salary requirement, and varying question prompts depending on the department. From that point, data reveals no formal direction for applicant screening exists other than "qualified candidates" should receive an interview. Thus, our participants described different ways in which applicants are screened, suggesting an unstructured process for screening.

Theme 3: Unstructured

Considering that no formal direction for screening candidates is given, many participants conveyed formal screening systems are not employed. In fact, candidate screening processes are carried out through siloed and collaborative lenses, dependent on the hiring manager. For example, Wolverine, Snowshoes, and SB's process for screening applicants include 1-2 hiring committee members. On the contrary, participants from the athletics and high-performance departments suggested they construct dynamic committees, seeking to include a diversity of thought. Speaking to this diversity of

thought, Falcon stated: “The last few times, I think we had seven people in the hiring committee. And we tried to have some diverse perspectives in a few different ways. We had some of our current coaching staff, three men and one woman. We had a chair of one of our committees, one was a current athlete, one was a retired alumni of the team. I think this last time the gender breakdown of our committee was three women and four men. So we've tried to have some gender diversity... we review with the hiring committee all the cover letters, CVs, and have subsequent discussions with the hiring committee about who we want to interview.” Regarding high-performance, Fred stated at least “5-6 people” screen applicants, further confirmed by the screening tool reviewed indicating at least three to five individuals are routinely involved. As athletics is the sole department expressing the routine use of a formal screening system, candidates are assessed using a grading matrix, distributing points based on “level of degree” (2 points), “amount of experience” (10 points), “sport background” (5 points), “role-specific experience” (2 points), “wildcard” (3 points) and “DEI candidate” (2 points), in which DEI candidates including people of color are ranked higher in the labor queue.

Despite high-performance being the only department consistently employing a formal grading system, all participants indicated their screening processes are “objective” because they primarily screen applicants based on information emerging from resumes, especially education and experience. This perspective from hiring managers aligns with Frank’s comment stating he implores hiring managers to “base everything, any decision you make on the job description.” However, some participants admitted they often filter candidates using additional criteria (e.g., expected salary, home location). For example,

Snowshoes stated: “If somebody's requesting a salary that's significantly beyond what we're able to pay, then that would be our first eliminator.” Similarly, Frank elaborated on an instance when hiring for an executive position and began the process by getting a sense of candidate salary expectations: “What I've been doing with our chief marketing officer position, is making that phone call introduction. In this, I'm being more specific because some other candidates have some pretty crazy salary requirements. So those are the first questions I'm going to ask [salary expectations], then I'll explain what the hiring range for a position is. And then kind of make a moving forward decision at that point.”. Through analyzing participant insight and documents regarding screening tactics, Team A's screening process lacks consistency and structure, in which applicants are primarily screened using self-induced strategies and personal judgment.

Hiring Process Step 4: Selection: Testing

After qualified candidates are identified, candidate testing is primarily conducted through two rounds of interviews, with one department requiring a presentation. The first round of interviews is administered through “Spark Hire,” a one-way video interviewing platform, which Frank stated is suggested for “large applicant pools.” As a result, all participants indicated Spark Hire is a prominent practice, expressing a proclivity toward the platform due to its time efficiency. Using Stevie’s insight as an example, Spark Hire is a convenient interviewing platform allowing hiring committees to collaborate: “We knew that we wanted to expand the amount of people we brought in to interview. So with our time, you know, constraints are like, alright, 20 hours worth of interviews, we probably don't have the time for actually sitting down and doing the interview, and then

discussing as a team, but we wanted to make sure that we're opening our lens a little further than just the handful that we would normally take. So, we chose a spark hire interview process, so that all 10 of us that were on the team could be assessing the candidate. We could watch those interviews at any time that we wanted, and we were able to get in 20 [candidates]. Whereas if it was like we're scheduling this for 9am, everybody's got to be here at 9am, everyone has different coaching schedules and what not, we wanted to make sure everybody was part of the process. And nobody was kind of left out on our team and assessing each candidate [through Spark Hire].”

The second round of interviewing for all participants consists of Zoom or in-person interviews. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 national health crisis, Zoom has been the prominent second-round practice throughout the past two years. In addition to Zoom interviews, Stevie’s department commonly tests candidates through a case study project, in which final candidates present how they would address an ongoing challenge within the department. Recognizing Team A’s primary candidate testing practice is interviews, the best practices document provides minimal direction for interviewing, including “set up Spark Hire for large candidate pools,” “interview qualified candidates,” interview required for internal candidates,” and “include athlete participation when appropriate.” Considering the lack of direction provided, participants detailed varying ways they operationalize the interview process, which revealed subjectivity in interview practices.

Theme 4: Variation & Subjectivity

Throughout Team A, the processes of constructing interview questions, conducting interviews, and evaluating interviews are operationalized differently in each department. Regarding spark interviews, many participants described how interview questions are created in a siloed format, in some instances with the assistance of Google searches. For example, SB elaborated on his interview question construction strategy: “I kind of do a Google search on what the best questions are to ask in an interview and I kind of use those to frame those questions and tailor it to the specific skills we're asking for. So I personally do a lot internet searches to create that framework [interview protocol].” Similarly, Wolverine creates questions through his lens: “I come up with the questions I want to ask them, it's specific to their CV. And then I've got three or four questions that I ask all candidates, just trying to get a feel for the person.” The high-performance department is the only one containing a collaborative interview question creation process in which Stevie, Fred, and Spector stated “scenario-based” interview questions oriented toward relationship building are constructed in an effort to determine “fit”.

Interviews are also primarily conducted and evaluated through minimal lenses, continuing with the siloed nature of the interview process. For example, Wolverine and Snowshoes described how they evaluate Spark Hire interviews alone, bringing in an additional party in the second round. Similarly, hiring committees within SB’s department generally consist of one or two individuals. On the contrary, hiring committees in athletics and high-performance departments conduct and evaluate

interviews collaboratively, with multiple committee members. High-performance document data and insight from Stevie, Fred, and Spector suggested the tendency of including three to ten departmental representatives when evaluating interviews. As one of two departments inviting collaboration within the interview process, the high-performance department was the only one that indicated implementing a formal grading system for evaluating interviews. Specifically, Stevie's department routinely uses an excel document to rank candidates interview performance.

Because no other department uses a formal system to evaluate interviews, many participants elaborated on the self-induced strategies employed. When discussing interview evaluation with Frank, the subjective nature of interview evaluation was suggested through this conditional statement: "If it's me, it's going to be Competency-based, experience, education in relation to the job description... and I encourage both myself and our hiring managers to tie in the decisions that they're making, to what we've outlined in the job description." Despite Frank's recommendation, he cited this as a challenge because hiring personnel tend to grade interviews through subjective lenses: "I wish I could provide you an example of how many times I try to tell supervisors when they're interviewing to really base your rankings on the factors that are outlined in the job description. Even when it comes to them saying, 'oh, I liked this person'. 'I didn't like this person'. I'm like, that's great. But how does that apply to the job description?"

Coinciding with this insight, participants confirmed this tendency by identifying the ways interviews are evaluated. For example, Stevie, Fred, and Spector stated their department assesses interviews based on how well they perceive candidates aligned with

their “departmental philosophy”, “culture”, “core values”, and overall fit. Prioritizing fit, Wolverine evaluates interviews based on “how well candidates interact” with the department. Similarly, SB stated his prominent evaluative practice is developing personal opinions regarding candidate’s “demeanor” and “fit”, and “bouncing that off the other person” on the hiring committee.

Hiring Process Step 5: Selection: The final candidate

Concerning selection, the best practices document directs hiring personnel to “choose the most qualified candidate”. However, participant insight reveals differing philosophies for selection exists within Team A. For example, while some participants consider selection criteria oriented toward objectivity including experience, interview performance, and level of training, many defining qualifiers were nebulous, immeasurable, and subjective. For example, because Falcon believes “skillset can be learned,” his philosophy for selection is based in identifying “good people” that are “hungry to learn”, “modest”, “has a growth mindset”, exhibiting “excitement” and “passion”. Despite the high-performance department promoting objectivity through collaboration, Stevie, Spector and Fred identified core elements throughout their selection criteria as perceiving candidates’ “ability to build relationships” and the ways they can add to the “culture”. Drawing from candidate interviews, Wolverine considers “how well the candidate interacts with the department”. Similarly, SB heavily considers “skillset”, “work ethic” and “fit.” Thus, through examining participant insight and documents, it is evident that Team A doesn’t have an established system for selection, subject to the

autonomy of each department. Furthermore, of utmost importance to many participants in selection is the phenomenon of “fit”.

Theme 5: The Salience and Variability of “Fit”

In the process of selecting the final candidate, perceived fit was a primary qualifier, as most participants associated fit with selection. Drawing from candidate interviews, every participant indicated that discussions surrounding fit actively arise among hiring committees during selection. When asking participants about these conversations, various conceptualizations of fit were identified, suggesting the ways “fit” is conceptualized across Team A varies.

Despite Frank admitting “fit” is “subjective,” it remains a defining feature of selection for him and many participants. For example, Frank associates fit with judging “interview performance”. Whereas, Stevie’s ideal fit is (a) someone whose values and behaviors align with the “departmental philosophy”, (b) “a cultural addition”, (c) exhibits proficiency in “relationship building”: “We have a list of behaviors on our philosophy doc, and how we work together as a high-performance team. Obviously, there's fit in terms of the team, right. We know that this team that this person works with traditionally don't really like strength and conditioning yet and so, we try to really figure out who is going to be an expert relationship builder with that team, because ultimately, it doesn't matter how much knowledge they have, their resume may be totally amazing. But, if they can't build a relationship and establish trust, then they're going to really struggle in that environment. And that's a huge red flag.” Another hiring manager in Stevie’s department, Spector, spoke to the “cultural addition” they seek: “I think we try and lean into, can we

find the best person that will at least enjoy the role, enjoy our culture, and add something to it as opposed to just fit in and be a yes person?” Through another lens from the same department, Fred described “fit” through the analogy, “can you sit with this person and airport for six hours?” and “character”.

With a similar approach, Wolverine stated candidate fit is demonstrated through having an affinity toward them in “interactions,” “likeability,” “vibes,” and when the candidate aligns with the “culture”. Prioritizing objective and subjective characteristics, Snowshoes associates fit with (a) the knowledge required for the role, (b) a “desire to develop,” and (c) if departmental staff can visualize working with the candidate. However, SB’s parameters for fit are completely subjective, drawing from candidate’s “demeanor,” potential adaptation to the “group dynamic,” and having a “work ethic” aligning with the departmental culture.

Theme 6: Irrelevance of Race in Hiring

After exploring participants’ perceptions of Team A’s hiring practices, the researcher inquired regarding the relevance of race within these practices. Drawing from the researcher’s analytic memos, when participants answered race-related questions from section 2 of the interview protocol, many responses demonstrated a sense of discomfort with the subject of race. For example, many participants provided one-word responses coupled with a lack of desire to expound when answering specific race-related questions (e.g., are conversations about race present throughout the hiring process?).

Despite this discomfort, participants provided substantial insight into the relevance of race within Team A’s hiring practices. Primarily, participants expressed race

is minimally considered, discussed, or addressed throughout hiring activities. This insight was striking, considering all participants suggested an overarching implicit awareness of the lack of racial diversity within Team A exists among organizational members. For example, Frank said: “I think most of our hiring managers know in the back of their head that we need to have a focus on a more diverse employee population, but we will still hire someone who’s the best fit.” Assuming an overarching understanding of a need for a more diverse staff exists, Frank provided insight into the relevance of race in hiring practices, suggesting its dependent on the hiring manager: “Right now, I think we depend on the judgment of the hiring manager. If that’s going to be your priority or not”. Thus, drawing from participant insight indicating minimal race-related conversations, considerations, or actions within hiring occur, the researcher suggests organizational members perceive race as largely irrelevant in hiring.

The irrelevance of race in hiring was evident through participants' tendency to attribute Team A’s challenge of fostering a racially diverse staff to factors unrelated to their hiring practices. Further, when asking SB, the eldest tenured participant, about the influence of their hiring practices on the racial demographics of their staff, he responded with the extreme statement: “I don’t think we’re discriminatory at all in our hiring practices,” suggesting hiring practices are unrelated to their racial diversity challenge. Falcon added to this perspective by stating, “I don’t think so [hiring practices being related to Team A’s racial diversity challenges in staff]. I think we’re getting the word out to a really broad community”. Similarly, Fred stated, “I think our hiring practices don’t contribute to our hiring of a more diverse staff. I think our overall practices (e.g.,

marketing) lead to a less diverse pool of candidates. So I don't think to me, there's anything wrong with our hiring practices, it is really everything else". Continuing with this decoupling, Spector said: " I don't think necessarily that our hiring practices are exclusionary, I just don't think they go out of their way to be inclusive." Instead, organizational members primarily attributed their challenge of fostering a racially diverse staff to the culture of winter snow sports and the location of their headquarters.

The culture of winter snow sports as White-dominated was identified as a salient factor influencing Team A's racial demographics. According to participants, Team A's sport attracts a certain demographic – White and wealthy – which Frank has coined as the "the cultural impact" of the sport: "It's that traditional culture of predominantly white sports in predominantly white areas. There's a significant, what do you want to call that financial barrier to these sports. And I think a lot of that contributes to just you know, having someone be interested in it and someone on the outside saying, I don't know if I belong in that organization. I really think it's the cultural impact". Thus, many participants believe this "cultural impact" influences the racial demographics of Team A's athletes and staff.

Suggesting an athlete-staff trickle-down effect, Falcon stated: we don't get many athletes of color that are interested in [the sport]. So we don't get many staff of color or diversity that are interested in working for the organization. So it's an issue that starts all the way down with attracting athletes to the sport... All of us that are in coaching, we all came from being athletes ourselves... all of us that coach for the organization, at least works with me, whether they were a technician, a coach, or in some sort of domestic

leadership position, they all come from being athletes themselves.” SB further associated the lack of racial diversity in Team A to the sport’s “cultural impact”: “I think it is broader. It’s [the sport], as a whole. I mean, the percentage of interracial people [people of color] in those sports is super low. So I think it’s mainly just a product of that. We travel around and interact with resorts, operation crews at resorts, and a super small percentage of black people, people of color involved in these sports at all levels. And I would say especially on sort of that operational side”. Following up on Fred’s previous comment attributing this challenge to Team A’s “overall practices”, Fred suggested the racialized ways the sport is marketed impacts their hiring pool: “I think every picture you see of [Team A] are white men and women on the [playing field] with other white men and women, it just doesn’t look like a racially inclusive environment, which would lead me to suspect that we would get white applicants not a more diverse pool... I don’t even think it’s fair to say the organization, I think it’s more fair to say like, we are a product of our environment, meaning the industry, the sport.”

Drawing from this “cultural impact” and its perceived influence on the demographic of Team A’s athletes and staff, Frank stated Team A’s leadership has acknowledged and addressed the athlete racialized disparities by requesting the DEI committee to create DEI oriented youth sport developmental programs in an effort to increase diversity amongst their athletes. However, no such request has been made to improve the racial diversity of the staff, with minimal attention given from leadership. For example, Stevie’s department proposed a DEI fellowship program oriented toward developing a diverse staff pipeline over “two years ago”; however, leadership has yet to

provide a financial commitment. Spector spoke to this frustration: “We took it upon ourselves to try and institute, basically a DEI in apprenticeship in high performance, to seek out, graduating, postgraduate, master's level candidates for a strength and conditioning fellowship for a year-long, and we have never gotten the financial support, we've been sitting on it for two years, and it just hasn't been a priority for the organization”. Further expounding upon the lack of attention to racial diversity from leadership, Spector said: “We've given a lot of lip service in the past two years but we haven't created any DEI, Director, C level, or executive position to really focus us on that. And I think that says a lot about our organization... Like, I'm pretty disappointed. It's great that we have a female CEO, but I'm still pretty disappointed that for all of the lip service we had as an organization two years ago or 18 months ago, what the fuck has changed?”

The location of Team A's headquarters was another perceived contributory factor to Team A's challenge in fostering a racially diverse staff because of its associated socio-economic characteristics. Specifically, many participants expressed that their headquarters being located in a predominately White expensive city in the southwest region of the United States negatively influences the diversity of their staff. For example, Stevie identified the location as a critical barrier impeding progression in hiring and retaining a racially diverse staff, which she illustrated through her witnessing the challenges a recent hire of color is experiencing as a racial minority situated in a racially disproportionate organization and city: “I've ran into a couple barriers that I don't know how to how to get through yet. Being in [Team A], living in [City A], and so that's where

I'm kind of stuck on some hiring stuff, too.” Building upon this concern, Spector spoke to the ways organizational and societal factors influence hiring and retention: “It's really hard to sell people on a job that potentially, they'd be walking into as either a token, DEI hire, or someone who is going to face a lot of obstacles, even though that's not our decision to make for them, I think we have a real challenge with us feeling like, if we hired a person of color, for instance, are they going to be supported by the organization in the ways that they need? And we do have two people of color on staff in high performance. And we used to have three. And those discussions came up frequently about, you know, the industry, there's a racial barrier there. There's a demographic barrier as far as economics. And it's really hard. And we've gone through this kind of circle a lot as high performance. Like, are we setting people up for a really challenging existence or experience with the national team, if they are the one or two-person of color, or women coach or whatever within the organization? And that becomes a really challenging thing for us when we're making decisions on hires.”

Concerning the economic aspect, Frank spoke to the location's high cost of living: “we're located in [A city], go look at home prices in [A city]. If you want to be a part of this organization, and if you want to live in a shack, great, but if you want a house, it's expensive. Wow. Like I'm struggling with that too. I'm actually still staying with friends”. Further, Wolverine stated the high cost of living influences how he operationalizes his hiring practices by constricting some job searches to selecting candidates living in-state.

The perceived salience of Team A's location influencing their staff demographic makeup is so strong that some participants suggested their headquarters relocate to a

more diverse city within the state approximately 30 miles away. For example, SnowShoes stated: “The location is a big part of it. If our headquarters were in [B city], instead of [A city], it would be totally different. [B city] despite what people hear, it's pretty diverse, especially with the university. Yeah, it would be totally different. But [A city] is extremely expensive, high end, half the houses are second homes, things like that. It's an interesting place.” Further, Frank described the potential ways relocation could influence the hiring pool: We should put the office in [B city] because you're going to have access to different talent pools there who may not want to do that commute from [A city] to [B city]. Yeah, so I guess we struggle with the culture.”

Aligning with participants’ tendency to decouple Team A’s racial diversity challenges from its practices, many participants identified Team A as progressive because of their DEI mechanisms. For example, SB, the longest-tenured participant, expressed his satisfaction in Team A’s DEI-related efforts: I think we have made a pretty strong effort, we formed a DEI committee... we’ve all done DEI trainings on multiple occasions, and we made an effort to try to attract people of all backgrounds ... to make as many people aware of opportunities at Team A”. Expounding on Team A’s DEI efforts, the researcher obtained the ways Team A communicates a commitment to racial diversity through documents and interviews. Considering race, Team A’s DEI statement, DEI Action Plan, and external DEI consultants do not prioritize race. Instead, Team A’s current DEI statement consists of definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion, their DEI vision, and guiding principles, all of which fail to specifically mention race. Further, Team A’s 2017-20 DEI action plan included a goal to “recruit” more “people of color, women, LGBTQ,

military veterans, and people with disabilities” through “forwarding jobs to “USOC Diversity and Inclusion”, with no specific goal or strategy oriented toward race.

Coinciding with document data, Frank indicated Team A contracts two DEI consultants who’s training solely consists of introducing generalized DEI concepts, with one oriented explicitly toward the LGBTQI+ community, with nothing for race: “What we've done this past year, is have generalized DEI training, we actually even had a specific session on LGBTQ+ stuff. But these have been wide trainings for everyone. And the LGBTQ+ training was actually fairly basic, just introducing concepts and definitions.”

As many participants demonstrated the irrelevance of race in hiring practices through being uncritical toward their hiring practices, some participants shed light on Team A’s role in racial inequity. According to participants, the disproportionate racial demographics of their staff weren't considered until 2020, and since then, race-related challenges in hiring have minimally been addressed as Spector stated: “I think the biggest [issue] is not making it [racial diversity in staff] a priority”. Providing insight into the overall lack of prioritization of race in hiring, participants indicated they hadn’t seen anything done to give people of color more opportunities, there is a lack of consideration of race in hiring spaces, and many hiring practices are biased due to the lack of training. For example, Snowshoes said “I've never seen anything specifically done to try and focus on giving someone a better opportunity [racial minorities]... We've had seminars, we've had different discussions, I'm not sure we have anything that's very concrete on how to contribute and improve that ratio.” Similarly, Spector stated: “ I don't think we see seek out diverse candidates because I think we hire, if I'm being personally transparent, my

perception is that we hire people from within the sports community, the winter sports community, which is demographically White, upper class, or White, wealthy, you know, particularly male. So I think we haven't made it a priority to seek out people to hire that are BIPOC, or, you know, diverse candidates.” Thus, given organizational members' perceptions regarding race and hiring practices, subthemes demonstrating the irrelevance of race include (a) *The lack of race-related conversations* and the (b) *The lack of race-related practices*.

Subtheme: Lack of Race-Related Conversations in Hiring

Considering the aforementioned overarching organizational ignorance toward addressing racial disparities amongst Team A’s staff, conversations about race and racial inequities are further disregarded in hiring environments. As an executive leadership team member, Wolverine mentioned that racial diversity in hiring is vaguely acknowledged in leadership meetings and never discussed in hiring environments. In fact, many participants shared similar sentiments regarding their experiences of engaging in race-related conversations, in which they all responded with a simple “no,” with no desire to expound, suggesting the irrelevance of race in hiring-related conversations.

Throughout Team A, hiring committees have the propensity to neglect to engage in conversations regarding their historic disproportionate hiring patterns and the influence of race on hiring practices. Providing more insight than a simple “no”, in Falcon’s 10+ years of being involved in Team A’s hiring, he stated: “I don’t really remember ever actively discussing race [in hiring].” Recognizing this tendency, Frank said race-related discussions and considerations are on his “to-do list” but ultimately depends on the

prioritization of the hiring manager. For example, Stevie's department is the only one whose hiring committees consistently engage in race-related conversations, focusing on "racial biases and fairness" in practices. Spector spoke more to these race-related conversations: "[we discuss race in hiring spaces] Probably more than anywhere else in the organization because we actually have people of color in our department and women in our department, and I think that has spurred a lot of it, to be honest with you, if we did not, I don't know if we would have had the same consideration, sadly."

Subtheme: "Minimal" Race-Related Practices in Hiring

Considering Team A's reported hiring practices, many participants perceived race as irrelevant within them. In other words, many participants are not conscious of the influence of race in hiring practices, with no consideration or strategies toward racial equity in any element of the hiring process. Participants provided specific insight regarding the irrelevance of race in job descriptions and postings, attraction and recruitment, screening, testing, and evaluation practices.

All participants suggested that race is not considered when constructing job descriptions and posting content. Through a straightforward approach, Spector stated: "I've never seen a job description from our organization that explicitly says, 'we are seeking people with diverse skills, mindsets, backgrounds, religions, races, creeds, whatever,' which some companies do." Regarding attraction and recruitment, many hiring managers have never considered race in attraction and recruitment practices, with no recruitment strategies oriented toward racial minorities. For example, despite the hiring best practices document instructing hiring managers to post jobs to "appropriate

diversity job sites,” no participants have ever posted jobs to such sites. For example, Spector said: “When we post jobs, I think we do the *minimum*, if I’m honest. We put it on our website and put it on Indeed. It doesn’t go out to a network [racial minority network], we don’t engage with networks [racial minority networks].” The lack of race-related recruitment practices was also evident through SB’s interview. When SB stated, “we recently made efforts to try to attract people of all backgrounds for positions,” the researcher inquired on what was done, in which he responded by stating jobs were posted on more local and national job platforms, including “Indeed and Malakye.” Continuing with this approach, Fred stated his department tries to “place job hiring postings and reach out to a group of people that don’t apparently normally apply to our jobs”. However, when asking Fred about these associated actions, Fred failed to list any specific strategies.

In turn, all participants attribute their struggle of casting a wide diverse net due to limited networks. For example, Wolverine stated: “in my industry [IT], specifically, the candidate pool is extremely low for black, brown, and females.” Further, Snowshoes suggested the lack of people of color in the winter snow sports network influences their hiring pool because they tend to hire through that familiar network: “I think that from a grassroots level, to get more people of color we need more diversity in the people coming up through the system. Right now they become (winter sports athletes) and then they just keep rising up through the ranks.” Continuing this discussion regarding the innate hiring pool Team A attracts, Spector said: “I don’t think as an organization we give off the air that we’re welcoming. I don’t think we’re adversely opposed, but people would not seek it

out [Team A jobs] unless they have a true passion for the sports that we're involved with.” To counter this homophily and social similarity, Stevie’s department is in the beginning phases of establishing relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). However, these efforts have not been implemented yet.

Despite Frank stating candidates' race is visible to hiring committees through the ADP hiring platform, many participants ignore race when screening applicants. For example, as Wolverine is aware of the racial and gender disparities within his department, he prioritizes gender through his screening process, but not race: “I try to pull those candidates (women) out of the dashboard and move them higher into the pecking lists [hierarchy, order]. And when you have that list, it tends to be female and male that I'll pull up because from a CV, I don't know what color your skin is, or you know, what your sexual preferences are anything. And frankly, I learned at Red Bull, I don't really care because I want the best candidate.” Similarly, Fred expounded on a strategy employed oriented toward gender, but not race: “We are really trying to increase the diversity of applicants, on the coaching side, especially the gender split of applicants... We've done a better job lately of hiring women, but frankly, we've had to ask women to apply to make an equal or close to equal representation in our applicant pools.... We've reached out to a few women that we think would be excellent for the role and encourage them to apply. And that's worked. If I were to go through that same thing to hire, you know, a black candidate, I wouldn't even know where to reach out to and suggest you should apply.” Building upon Fred’s insight, Falcon provided context for the gender diversity foci in athletics, concluding with a recent example of creating

opportunities for women in coaching: “One of our organizational goals is actually to improve our gender equity in coaching, because women are very under representative, in [Team A] coaching at the highest level at this at the NGB level. And so I'm actually proud to say that we're almost at 50% now female in our coaching staff... In several of those hiring's we went out and actively asked two of those women to apply who did not apply at all during the application process. But we knew that they would be good candidates... they were both women from our community that we had worked alongside, you know, in other roles, or other capacities, or seen coaching or done a small project.” However, when the researcher asked Falcon if any considerations with respect to race has ever been given, he stated: “I think we were just focused on who the people were that we [already] had in the [hiring] process.” Also considering gender, SB stated “I think it's [race] really not considered. I think whether it's gender or race. We are really looking at that skill set”. Similarly, Frank stated that his sole goal is to hire the most qualified candidate.

On the contrary, Stevie considers race in screening and evaluation, as her hiring committees often come to the consensus that they “really don't want to just hire another white man.” This commitment to counter the status quo was evidenced through the screening tool provided to the researcher by Stevie, which revealed how DEI candidates, later specified by Stevie as including racial minorities, receive additional points through their formal grading system. Spector spoke to this mechanism: “We include a point bonus for DEI candidates, to at least give them the chance of moving on to whatever the next round is. And I would say it probably has become more and more of a consideration,

especially as we went through the pandemic, and all of the socio-cultural challenges. I think we really wanted to make sure we were at the very least a department that didn't just moved past it... we try and give them every leg up... to keep them in the process as long as possible. So they have a shot.”

In addition, Stevie provided multiple instances in which her hiring committees actively criticize their interviewing and evaluation practices in an effort to monitor biases and ensure they aren't perpetuating racial exclusion: “We didn't mind spending more time in interviews, because we wanted to make sure we didn't leave anybody out that was maybe a mistake on our side. And again, we're the ones that are grading the questions. So you know, whatever biases we have, we want to make sure that we're not leaving behind a few people that missed the top 10 by a point or two points or whatever”....

“ [recollecting on an instance] this white man killed it on interviews and did everything, but we were like, but so did these three people, and like, yeah, maybe that white man's score was ultimately the better one. But like, why was that? You know, because there's obviously subjective questions in there, too, to be biased towards that. Just because he scored the best, does that mean we're going to exclude these other three people?”

Considering the data set, Stevie's department appears to be an outlier in giving particular consideration to race in Team A's hiring.

Chapter Summary

In an effort to understand the ways Team A conceptualized and described their hiring practices, 16 interviews and 15 documents were analyzed. In turn, the researcher identified the procedural components of Team A's hiring as including job description and

posting composition, attraction and recruitment, screening, testing, and selection. Related themes were constructed through those categories including Job Description and Posting Creation being a (1) *“Moving Target*, attraction and recruitment practices demonstrates a (2) *A Proclivity Toward “Familiar” Professional Networks*, screening is an (3) *Unstructured Process*, interview practices contain (4) *Variation and Subjectivity*, and (5) *The Salience and Variability of “Fit”* during selection. Further, through analyzing participant insight, race was suggested as *irrelevant* in Team A’s hiring practices. Despite leadership and coinciding staff being aware of Team A’s challenge in fostering a racially diverse staff, many attribute this challenge to macro-level factors outside their control. Thus, many participants neglected *race-related conversations and practices* throughout hiring practices.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study sought to obtain an understanding of the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization and the ways in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity. To illuminate the problem, Chapter 1 provided background on racial inequity in sport and the Olympic movement and the current study's contribution to the literature. As a multi-disciplinary study, Chapter 2 reviewed literature from various disciplines. With the conceptual foundation of this study rooted in human resource management, sociology, and sport management scholarship, the researcher identified relevant concepts, illuminating its applicability. Continuing with Chapter 2, the suitability of Gidden's (1984) Structuration Theory and Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations to theoretically buttress the current study were identified and expounded upon. Next, two research questions guided the current study:

RQ1: How does an Olympic-level sport organization conceptualize and describe its hiring practices?

RQ2: In what ways do organizational members perceive race as being relevant in hiring practices?

To address these research questions, Chapter 3 outlined the study's methodology and its associated philosophical assumptions and beliefs, design, data collection, and data analysis methods. Rooted in *constructionism*, knowing was characterized through the researcher drawing from the data to interpret meanings. Data will be critiqued through a *critical inquiry* lens to identify practices contributing to racial inequity (Alvesson &

Deetz, 2000; Crotty, 1998). To carry out the study, a qualitative methodology, Yin's (2017) *holistic single case design*, was selected to explore an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization (case definition) hiring practices (context). Case and participant selection was purposeful, using inclusion and exclusion criteria, which identified Team A as the case and recruited eight organizational members as participants. Data collection consisted of interviewing these eight organizational members twice and collecting 15 hiring-related documents. By employing two coding cycles and triangulating the data, the researcher understood Team A's hiring practices and the perceived relevance of race, ultimately addressing both research questions.

Drawing from 16 interviews with eight participants and 15 documents, the researcher answered RQ1 and RQ2. Team A conceptualized and described their hiring practices through the major components of their hiring process, including: (1) constructing job descriptions, job announcements and postings, (2) posting the job, (3) screening applicants, (4) testing, and (5) selection. Within these components, themes were constructed, including 1) *"Moving Target"* (2) *A Proclivity Toward "Familiar" Professional Networks* (3) *Unstructured* (4) *Variation and Subjectivity* (5) *The Salience and Variability of "Fit"*. Through exploring the perceived relevance of race on hiring practices, participants suggested *the irrelevance of race on hiring practices*, evident through *the lack of race-related conversations and minimal race-related practices* in hiring, answering RQ2.

The purpose of the current study was twofold, (a) to seek an understanding of the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization and (b) the ways

in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity. The study's findings provided a comprehensive understanding of Team A's hiring practices through interviews and documents revealing prominent procedures and practices employed. Procedurally, the major components of Team A's hiring practices align with literature – creating job descriptions and postings, attraction and recruitment, screening, testing, and selection (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020; Hurd et al., 2020; Mathis et al., 2015; Picardi, 2019; Snell et al., 2015). However, the ways Team A's hiring practices are operationalized is striking, with significant implications addressing the ways racial inequity is (re)produced. Thus, informed by components of Giddens (1984) structuration theory, Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations, HRM, and race-related literature, the discussion critically analyzes the findings, exposing various ways Team A's hiring practices (re)produces racial inequity. Next, drawing from the study's findings and discussion, conclusions and recommendations are provided. Lastly, the researcher illuminates the study's limitations and directions for future research.

Discussion

Job Descriptions & Posting Content: Racialized Credentials & Racialized Requirements

Through a critical analysis of Team A's job description and posting content, some of the common MERs and KSAOs tend to contribute to racial inequities. Specifically, the findings revealed salient job requirements within job postings, includes an affinity toward winter snow sports and the job location at their headquarters. Given how Frank and additional participants conceptualized the “cultural impact of the sport” as oriented

toward Whiteness, indicating an affinity toward snow sports as a core requirement or preference on job postings operates as a *racialized credential* privileging Whiteness (Ray, 2019a). The prominence of this racialized credential on actual practices is striking considering participants reported awareness of the racialized culture of the sport. In other words, being conscious of the White-dominated culture of the sport, yet routinely operationalizing this racialized credential on job postings is paradoxical, illuminating the *ordinariness* of racist mechanisms (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The perceived salience of Team A's headquarters location on the racial demographics of their staff aligns with existing scholarship describing the ways one's cultural background influences career decisions (McAlpine, 2012). Considering the demographics of the city in which Team A's headquarters is located being 86.4% White, including the job's location as their headquarters on job postings operates as a *racialized requirement* (Ray, 2019a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). This racialized requirement perpetuates Whiteness because it inherently attracts the racialized demographic aligning with the location's culture.

Team A's job postings routinely including an affinity toward snow winter sports and the job's location as their headquarters align with a component of Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations, *Whiteness is a credential*. In this, Team A facilitates a *racialized hiring process* because these ostensibly race-neutral job requirements are implicitly oriented toward Whiteness, which constricts the talent pool and contributes to perpetuating the status quo (Hylton, 2018; Ray, 2019a). Thus, the *racialization of credentials and requirements* demonstrates how (a) an organization may operate as

racialized, (b) the ways job requirements and preferences operate as a form of *social closure*, implicitly excluding people of color, and (c) the ordinariness of racism embedded into organizational practices, which ultimately (re)produces racial inequities (Albiston & Green, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ray 2019a).

Racialized Recruitment: Liberal Practices

To attract and recruit a wide net of applicants, HRM literature suggests employing internal and external recruitment methods (Arthur, 2015; Hollenbeck et al., 2015; Hurd et al., 2020). However, Team A frequently employs narrow recruitment strategies primarily through professional networks, inevitably producing racial inequity. In fact, homologous hiring pools are produced because recruitment is largely limited to dispersing job postings to networks familiar with Team A (Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Stredwick, 2013). For example, through posting jobs on their website, local media, colleges and universities, outdoor sports job sites; and the tendency to draw from previous interns, applicants, athletes, and coaches, candidates are likely to be local or have an affinity toward the sport. Further, although posting jobs on national networking sites broadens the net, it does not specifically aid in attracting a racially diverse candidate pool. Aligning with CRT's critique of liberalism, through a similar approach, Team A's liberal recruitment practices oriented toward equal opportunity (re)produces racial inequities because it produces racialized outcomes-oriented toward Whiteness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Rondini, 2021).

The findings reveal that race is viewed as largely irrelevant in hiring practices because race is not addressed in hiring spaces through conversations or actions.

Regarding recruitment, the irrelevance of race was demonstrated through the unanimous report of never posting jobs on diversity-related websites. Moreover, given the contemporary demographic data of Team A, recruitment strategies rooted in the liberal ideology of *race-neutrality* and *color-blindness* covertly perpetuate systemic racial inequity by producing homologous hiring pools (Bernstein et al., 2020; Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Furthermore, the lack of recruiting strategies oriented toward racial diversity coupled with Team A's reactive and rushed hiring tendencies creates more racial inequities.

Because Team A doesn't employ proactive race-related recruitment practices, hiring committees inherently recruit through familiar networks, illuminating the routine nature of racial exclusion. Particularly, Team A's tendency to hire through professional networks (e.g., the athlete and coach pipeline) sustains the social order (Fernandez & Mors, 2008; Hurd et al., 2020; Kmec, 2006). Drawing from Ray's (2019a) work, the researcher has illuminated the ways racial schemas of color-blindness and race-neutral ideology are embedded into recruitment strategies, which ultimately constricts racial minority's access and (re)produces racial inequity in Team A (Ray, 2019a).

Race isn't a Priority

Drawing from Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) critique of feminism and the emergence of intersectionality theory, historically, gender issues have been centered while ignoring the role of race (Frazier et al., 2000). From the perspective of Black women, intersectionality theory was birthed because the intersection of *race* and gender was neglected in feminism and anti-discrimination law, exacerbating the experiences of

Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Through a similar approach, Team A has demonstrated a greater commitment to gender (and sexuality) than race, which perpetuates the racial status quo. For example, Wolverine and SB have implemented strategies to improve the representation of women within Team A, yet they largely neglected race. Similarly, DEI training has given special attention to the LGBTQ+ community but not racial minorities. Moreover, the lack of race-related conversations and practices in hiring spaces suggests race isn't a priority in hiring.

Because Team A neglects to center race in organizational practices, people of color are marginalized and excluded in hiring. In other words, when race is omitted from organizational practices, systems are created without taking people of color into account, perpetuating racial inequity in Team A's hiring. Thus, the researcher suggests, components of Crenshaw's (1989) societal critique is evident through Team A's hiring practices, in which prioritizes gender and trivializes race.

The Macro influencing the Meso

Building on Cunningham's (2019) multi-level model, the current study revealed the ways emerging factors operating on multiple levels of analyses interact and influence each other (Cooper et al., 2020). With the focal point on hiring practices, data suggests that the macro-level factors of location and the overarching culture of a sport may contribute to racial differences on the organizational level (meso). For example, SB limited his recruitment strategy to local mediums (meso) because of the perceived salience of location (macro). Further, Stevie and Spector communicated skepticism regarding hiring people of color due to the racial climate associated with Team A (e.g.,

winter snow sport industry, location, organization). In turn, Team A tends to rely on familiar networks, including the winter snow sport pipeline, to recruit for jobs, allowing the macro to produce racially homologous outputs on the meso. As identified through this case study, emerging macro-level factors of location and the overarching culture of a sport can interact and influence hiring practices in a way that detrimentally affects people of color's opportunities and experiences in sport organizations (Cunningham, 2019).

The Lack of Formal Systems Produces Subjective Hiring Practices

Considering the reported instability of the human resources department, Team A lacks formal systems for hiring practices which are, in turn, subject to hiring managers. Through analyzing the various ways Team A operationalizes hiring practices, subjectivity is apparent. In addition, literature expresses the inherently subjective nature of hiring practices, especially screening, testing, and evaluation processes (Bauer et al., 2019; Celani & Singh, 2011; Fernandez & Mors, 2008; Hilal et al., 2017; Hurd et al., 2020; Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018; Reskin & Roos, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Stredwick, 2013; Taylor et al., 2015). Thus, the lack of institutionalized formal systems exacerbates subjectivity throughout Team A's practices.

Drawing from Gidden's (1984) duality of structure, because individual actions guide structures and structures guide individual actions, Team A's organizational members have shaped hiring practices due to the lack of structure. In other words, the individual actions of hiring personnel and the lack of formal structure, work in tandem to (re)produce racially inequitable structures (Giddens, 1984). For example, the lack of formal systems for screening, interviewing, and evaluation by at least five out of the six

departments has allowed hiring personnel to employ self-induced strategies that are inherently subjective, which ultimately guides hiring decisions, exhibiting poor HRM practice (Acker, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

The salience of agency guiding hiring structures was demonstrated through the ways some participants conduct hiring processes through minimal collaboration, and employing individualized, biased criteria and tools to screen, test, and evaluate applicants. These practices contribute to (re)producing the status quo because of the lack of diversity of thought and objective measures. For example, applicants are primarily assessed based on cultural and subjective characteristics, which scholarship indicates tends to produce homologous hiring decisions (Hurd et al., 2020; Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018; Picardi, 2019). Thus, the [individual actions] of hiring personnel and the [structure], or in Team A's case the lack thereof, works symbiotically to (re)produce an inequitable hiring system and poor HRM and DEI practice (Giddens, 1984; Hawkins, 2010). Thus, in the case of Team A, overall poor HRM practices has (re)produced inequitable HRM and DEI outcomes (e.g., predominate White staff).

Continuing with subjectivity, Team A is likely to select candidates that perceivably “fit” with the organization, department, and role, aligning with the concept of *person-organization fit* (Bratton & Gold, 2017; Chelladurai, 2012). Considering the salience of perceived fit within Team A's selection practices, the ways in which fit was conceptualized must be analyzed critically. When describing fit, objective characteristics arose, including candidates aligning with the required MERs and KSAOs associated with the job description. However, many conceptualizations of fit were subjective including

values and behavioral characteristics aligning with the “department” and “culture”, “a desire to develop”, “work ethic”, “ability to build relationships”, “interview performance”, likeability, “demeanor”, “adaptation to the group dynamic,” and “vibes”.

According to scholarship, “fit” is inherently subjective and is primarily operationalized to hire based on social similarity, often working against people of color (Picardi, 2019). Building upon this insight, the subjectivity permeating through Team A’s idea of “fit” (re)produces racial inequity in various ways. For example, because of the influence of fit on selection, these behavioral and cultural characteristics (e.g., vibes, likeability, demeanor, cultural addition, interactions, etc.) operationalize as *homogenous signals*, placing people of color lower in the hiring queue due to the prominence of social similarity and homophily (Celani & Singh, 2011; Hilal et al., 2017; Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018; Picardi, 2019; Spence, 1973). Considering the literature, the researcher contends the lack of formal systems within Team A allows hiring committees to screen, test, and evaluate candidates using subjective practices that inherently produce multiple forms of racial inequity.

The Social Construction of Race: The Racialized Prototypical Candidate

Following the racial ideology of this study – race as a social construct creates social realities that systemically privilege White people and marginalize people of color – the social construction of race is evident through Team A’s hiring practices privileging Whiteness and marginalizing people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). For example, the ways Whiteness is credentialed through racialized job requirements, and Team A’s proclivity toward recruiting through familiar professional networks, systemically

privileges White candidates and excludes people of color. In other words, because job credentials, requirements, recruitment strategies, and signals operationalize as racialized, Whiteness is privileged, and the prototypical candidate is socially constructed as White (Gündemir et al., 2014; Ray, 2019a). Thus, these racialized job credentials, requirements, recruitment strategies and signals create a *racialized hiring process* in which Whiteness is granted access, and people of color are excluded (Ray, 2019a).

Racialized Decoupling

Drawing from DEI scholarship, presenting a commitment to diversity without addressing equity leads to forms of decoupling, which Team A has further confirmed (Berry, 2016). According to interviews and documents, Team A demonstrates a commitment to DEI through a DEI committee, DEI statements, and external consultants conducting DEI training. However, their actual hiring practices (re)produce racial inequity (Ray, 2019a). Considering diversity ideology, Team A created a narrative of valuing diversity without actually challenging the status quo (Mayorga-Gallo, 2019). Thus, according to Ray (2019a), Team A further identifies as a racialized organization because *racialized decoupling* is apparent. Specifically, because Team A's ostensible commitment to DEI through DEI mechanisms fail to align with actual practices, they are operationalized as a smokescreen obscuring ongoing racial inequity (Ray, 2019a). For example, Team A presents themselves as progressive through a DEI-related committee, rhetoric, external consultants, and trainings, however racial inequity persists within their hiring practices. In this way, Team A appears progressive, satisfying many stakeholders (e.g., staff), yet racially inequitable hiring practices are covertly (re)produced.

Lack of Attention to Structural Racism

Drawing from participant perceptions detailing why Team A struggles to foster a racially diverse staff, macro-level factors were primarily identified, neglecting to criticize the organization. Through a critical lens, attributing racial differences within Team A to societal factors normalizes the disproportionate racial makeup, presuming “this is just the way it is,” ultimately driving color-blind and race-neutral practices (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Thus, considering Team A’s hiring practices orientation toward liberalism, the necessity for structural changes is eliminated (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Such an approach aligns with traditional race-relations scholarship suggesting racial inequities exist because of micro and macro-level factors, ignoring the ways organizational elements may operate as racialized (Ray, 2019a). In turn, the overarching lack of attention to structural racism produced a lack of accountability, which was evident through the lack of race-related conversations and practices.

All Thought, No Talk, No, Action: The Detrimental Effects of Color-Mute, Color Blind, and Race-Neutral Practices

The theme, *irrelevance of race in hiring*, illuminates various ways racial inequities are (re)produced. First, Team A institutionalizes racist hiring practices through enacting *color-blind and race-neutral practices* – ignoring the influence of race on hiring practices (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Next, building upon Bonilla-Silva’s (2018) scholarship on color-blind racism, the researcher suggests *color-mute* ideology is an additional form of modern-day racism. Color-blindness, the idea of not seeing race, (re)produce racial inequities because when embedded into organizational

practices, they create racialized outcomes. Specifically, Team A 's color-blind approach to hiring is evident through minimal race-related practices, which dually ignores and perpetuates racial inequity. As an extension of Bonilla-Silva's (2018) work, the researcher suggests Team A engages in *color-mute conversations* – ignoring race in conversations –, further trivializing the influence of race on practices. Similar to color-blindness, color-mute ideology diminishes the significance of race by avoiding race-related conversations, ignoring active forms of racism, suggesting change is unnecessary. In other words, because Team A doesn't discuss race in hiring environments, racial inequities are ignored, dismissed, and remain unaddressed. In this way, color-blindness and color-muteness are interconnected, in which color-muteness may lead to color-blindness, but also color-blindness may lead to color-muteness. Building upon previous conceptualizations of color-muteness, asserting “if you profess not to see or notice racial differences, you cannot talk about them” (Sue, 2016, p.76), the researcher suggests this idea also works vice versa: If you don't talk about race, you probably won't address race. Ultimately, failing to acknowledge, discuss, or address the effect of race on hiring practices perpetuates the issue, (re)producing racially inequitable hiring practices.

Next, considering Ray's (2019a) schema-resource coupling, the racial schemas of color-blind, color-mute, and race-neutral ideology are connected to the ways hiring practices are operationalized, ultimately restricting access from people of color (Ray, 2019a). In fact, this schema-resource coupling institutionalizes racial inequities through Gidden's (1984) duality of structure (Ray, 2019a). Because hiring personnel shape hiring practices through color-blind, color-mute and race-neutral actions, such racially

inequitable structures are institutionalized and (re)produced over time (Giddens, 1984). Further, although Stevie's department resists and challenges racial inequity through having race-related conversations, monitoring racial biases, and criticizing their processes, such practices were absent in other departments, lacking the influence to change Team A's prominent racially inequitable hiring practices (Jarzabkowski, 2008). In summation, individual actions of hiring managers created color-mute, color-blind, and race-neutral structures, which in turn guide their actions, dictate hiring decisions, which (re)produces racial inequities (Giddens, 1984; Hylton, 2018; Kmec, 2006).

Summary

With the purpose of the current study being to seek an understanding of the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization and the ways in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity, this discussion revealed various ways Team A's hiring practices (re)produces racial inequity. In doing so, the current study's findings were critically analyzed drawing from relevant components of the study's theoretical frameworks, Ray's (2019) Theory of Racialized Organizations, Structuration Theory. Further scholarship from CRT, racial ideology, signaling theory, Cunningham's (2019) multi-level framework, and DEI and HRM aided in the analysis. Through this process of confirming, contradicting, and illuminating new phenomena, the current study provided meaningful contributions to the fields of sport management, sociology, and human resource management.

Building upon Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations, the current study illuminated the ways an organization's hiring practices may operate as racialized.

Specifically, the *schema-resource coupling*, the ways *Whiteness is credentialed*, and *decoupling is racialized* within Team A's hiring practices were revealed. First, the *schema-resource coupling* was identified through the ways liberal ideology is embedded into hiring practices, ultimately excluding people of color. Next, *Whiteness is a credential* was apparent through *racialized* job credentials and requirements, recruitment strategies, and selection criteria privileging Whiteness and marginalizing people of color. Lastly, *racialized decoupling* was evident in how Team A decouples their formal commitments to DEI from actual practices, serving to obscure ongoing racial inequity. Based on this theoretical foundation, the researcher suggests Team A operates as a racialized organization because their hiring practices play a fundamental role in (re)producing racial inequities.

Giddens's (1984) *structuration theory* was employed to elucidate the relationship between agency and structure, revealing multiple ways racial inequity has been (re)produced. In the case of Team A, the duality of structure was apparent in numerous ways. Notably, the agency of hiring personnel coupled with the lack of formal structure institutionalized subjective, racially inequitable structures. Further, the liberal actions of hiring personnel created and shaped liberal structures, which perpetuated racial inequity over time. Through a HRM lens, Team A demonstrated poor HRM practice through the lack of formal structure allowing hiring personnel to employ self-induced strategies that are inherently subjective and racially inequitable.

Drawing from CRT, the way Team A socially constructs race ("The Social Construction Thesis"), the routine nature of racism ("Ordinariness"), and the salience of

liberalism in hiring practices (“critique of liberalism”) demonstrated the prevalence of racism in society. In addition, the prominent racial ideologies of race-neutrality, color-blindness, and the researcher coined concept *color-mute*, were embedded into hiring practices, illustrating various ways “new racism” operates in organizational structures (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Drawing from the historic patterns of race being neglected, race was further ignored through Team A’s DEI mechanisms prioritizing gender and sexuality before race (Crenshaw, 1989; Frazier et al., 2000). Considering theories of social closure, the current study responded to Murphy’s (1988) call by identifying the ways racialized credentials and signals contain implicit barriers that exclude people of color from access within Team A (Albiston & Green, 2018; Bills et al., 2017). Furthermore, HRM and sociological concepts of *homophily*, *homologous reproduction*, and *person-organization fit* provided various ways Team A’s hiring practices operate as racially inequitable (Bauer et al., 2019; Celani & Singh, 2011; Fernandez & Mors, 2008; Hilal et al., 2017; Hurd et al., 2020; Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018; Reskin & Roos, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Stredwick, 2013; Taylor et al., 2015). Lastly, DEI scholarship, including diversity ideology and Cunningham’s (2019) multi-level framework, demonstrated the ways racial inequities persist on multiple organizational levels in Team A (Berry, 2016; Cooper et al., 2020; Mayorga-Gallo, 2019).

Conclusions

The current study obtained an understanding of the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization and the ways in which these hiring practices (re)produced racial inequity. To illuminate the problem, Chapter 1 provided

background on racial inequity in sport and the Olympic movement and the current study's contribution to the literature. As a multi-disciplinary study, Chapter 2 reviewed literature from various disciplines. With the conceptual foundation of this study rooted in human resource management, sociology, and sport management scholarship, the researcher identified relevant concepts, illuminating its applicability. Continuing with Chapter 2, the suitability of Gidden's (1984) Structuration Theory and Ray's (2019a) theory of racialized organizations to theoretically buttress the current study were identified and expounded upon. Next, two research questions guided the current study: RQ1: How does an Olympic-level sport organization conceptualize and describe its hiring practices?

RQ2: In what ways do organizational members perceive race as being relevant in hiring practices?

To address these research questions, Chapter 3 outlined the study's methodology and its associated philosophical assumptions and beliefs, design, data collection, and data analysis methods. Rooted in *constructionism*, knowing was characterized through the researcher drawing from the data to interpret meanings. Data was critiqued through a *critical inquiry* lens to identify practices contributing to racial inequity (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Crotty, 1998). To carry out the study, a qualitative methodology, Yin's (2017) *holistic single case design*, was selected to explore an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization (case definition) hiring practices (context). Case and participant selection was purposeful, using inclusion and exclusion criteria, which identified Team A as the case and recruited eight organizational members as participants. Data collection

consisted of interviewing these eight organizational members twice and collecting 15 hiring-related documents. By employing two coding cycles and triangulating the data, the researcher understood Team A's hiring practices and the perceived relevance of race, ultimately addressing both research questions.

The current study's findings identified Team A's procedural hiring components, including; job description and posting composition, attraction and recruitment, screening, testing, and selection. Through those categories, related themes associated with RQ1 were constructed, including *"Moving Target", A Proclivity Toward "Familiar" Professional Networks, Unstructured, Variability & Subjectivity, and The Salience and Variability of "Fit"*. Considering RQ2, participants perceived race as *irrelevant* in hiring practices, with a *lack of race-related conversations* and *minimal race-related practices*.

As delineated in Chapters 1 and 2, very little attention has been given to the hiring practices of organizations experiencing racial diversity challenges throughout the literature. With respect to the fields of sport management, human resource management, and sociology, there is a need for scholarship addressing racial inequities in organizational structures. Considering the lack of racial diversity in professional staff across the Olympic movement, this is the first study exploring the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization focusing on race, filling a gap in the literature. Considering the findings and discussion of the current study, the researcher has illuminated various ways Team A's hiring practices (re)produce racial inequity, landing on numerous conclusions explaining why Team A perpetually underperforms in fostering a racially diverse staff.

First, the current study concludes that Team A is a *racialized organization* that is fundamental in constructing racial inequity by facilitating a *racialized hiring process*. Further, the researcher suggests that the overarching lack of attention to structural racism coupled with Team A's *color-mute*, *color-blind*, and *race-neutral* hiring practices obscures racial inequity, which exacerbates the matter. Though ostensibly race-neutral, some of Team A's hiring practices, notably job requirements, attraction, recruitment, and selection strategies, operate in a way that privileges Whiteness and marginalizes people of color. In turn, these liberal hiring practices have socially constructed Team A's prototypical candidate as White. On top of that, because Team A communicates a commitment to DEI yet decouples this commitment from actual hiring practices, ongoing structural racism is obscured, serving to reinforce racial inequity. Next, Team A's organizational members and hiring practices are dually responsible for (re)producing racial inequity over time, which was revealed through Giddens's (1984) duality of structure. Specifically, the lack of formal structure in Team A's hiring practices and how hiring personnel utilize their agency by employing subjective and liberal practices perpetuates a racially inequitable hiring system. For example, Team A's tendency to hire based on homophily, social similarity, and subjective signals masked as person-organization fit inherently produces racial inequity.

Next, the researcher concludes Team A's hiring practices are a product of poor HRM practice and DEI management, in which the researcher suggests various parties are accountable. As an organizational structure, the high turnover rate of HR staff in an iterative manner is striking and relevant to the current study due to its connectedness to the

ways hiring practices are operationalized. Specifically, the high turnover rate of HR staff contributes to the lack of structure in Team A's hiring practices, which has produced a highly subjective hiring process. For example, Team A's hiring personnel's tendency to employ self-induced strategies (e.g., involving minimal personnel in the hiring process), draw from familiar professional networks, salient and subjective nature of "fit" to selection allows hiring personnel to construct their ideal candidate.

Responsible for perpetuating these racially inequitable and highly subjective hiring practices include leadership, HR staff, and hiring managers and committee members. First, leadership is responsible for the instability of the HR department, its subsequent effects, and the lack of priority in addressing racial differences, inequalities, and inequities within their hiring pattern of practice. Next, HR staff, hiring managers, and committee members are responsible for the lack of structure in hiring practices and highly subjective practices, resulting in the (re)production of poor HRM and DEI practices. Thus, informed by scholarship, the researcher has provided five recommendations to address these significant conclusions.

Recommendations: Toward Equity

As a racialized organization responsible for perpetuating racial inequity, the researcher proposes Team A shift its focus toward facilitating equity. Equity includes identifying inequities and redressing wrongs through adjusting organizational practices (Bernstein et al., 2020). The current study began this process by identifying the ways racial inequity operates within Team A's hiring practices. To carry out the second component of equity, Team A must adjust organizational practices accordingly. Drawing

from Team A's overarching race-neutral, color-blind, and color-mute nature, recommendation one serves as a starting point. Next, recommendations 2-5 describe how significant components of Team A's hiring practices should be restructured with respect to equity. Based on the current study's findings and relevant scholarship, the researcher has uniquely designed these recommendations for Team A.

Recommendation 1: Toward Equity: Acknowledgement

Team A being aware of their racial diversity challenges yet attributing them to macro-level factors beyond their control aligns with traditional race-relations scholarship, allowing the organization to obscure their role in constructing racial inequities, further perpetuating the matter (Ray, 2019a). Thus, before pursuing the forthcoming recommendations, Team A must acknowledge that they are a *racialized organization* that facilitates a *racialized hiring process* privileging Whiteness. First, however, organizational members must be enlightened to reach this state of ownership.

“Acknowledgment is the first step to recovery” is a fundamental practice in psychology and counseling fields when addressing any form of rehabilitation. Similarly, the researcher suggests “Acknowledgment is the first step to equity,” as inequity cannot be addressed without acknowledgment (Ray, 2019a). Regarding Team A, this acknowledgment must begin with leadership because leadership influences the ways organizational issues are prioritized and addressed. For leadership to reach the point of acknowledgment, they must first become aware of their role in (re)producing racial inequities.

To spark racialized awareness, Team A's HR staff, DEI consultants, or the researcher should present the current study's findings to leadership and describe how their normative routines of color-mute, color-blindness and race-neutrality ignore structural racism, which contributes to (re)producing the status quo (Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018). Once leadership obtains an empirical understanding that Team A operates as racialized through the racialization of their hiring practices, racial consciousness should be stimulated. At this point, the goal is for leadership to commit to structural change, which will inherently influence meso-level practices (e.g., high performance fellowship finally gets funding, enforcing equitable practices and procedures).

Because leadership influences the ways racial disparities are prioritized and addressed, the historical ignorance by Team A's staff regarding racialized matters has influenced the ways race is addressed in hiring spaces or the lack thereof (Acker, 2006). Thus, acknowledging structural racism is a feasible starting point in addressing racial inequity in Team A. Next, recommendations 2-5 provide practical strategies moving Team A's hiring practices toward equity. Following Jana and Diaz-Mejias (2018) model for "erasing institutional bias in hiring", these recommendations "lead with data" to "deconstruct subjectivity" and "reconstruct with objectivity" (p.89).

Recommendation 2: Toward Equity: Institutionalize Formal Hiring Practices

Because of the high turnover rate of HR directors and the historical lack of formal systems in hiring, Team A's hiring practices have been subjected to self-induced strategies. Working from scratch, the current HR director, holding this position for less than a year, has begun providing structure through creating a best practices for hiring

document and a job description template. However, the current study revealed the lack of specificity in those documents and the ways many departments fail to effectively utilize those mechanisms, ultimately suggesting these practices are not institutionalized. Given the scope of Team A (100+ employees) and the variability to which hiring practices are employed, the researcher proposes Team A institutionalize formal hiring practices through a hiring manual and subsequent hiring training.

Informed by the data in the current study, the hiring manual should be an all-encompassing dossier, outlining how to operationalize hiring practices through a step-by-step format. The director of HR, Chief of Staff, and additional DEI consultants and scholars should collaborate in creating this manual, prioritizing collaboration and objectivity in practices. In turn, the processes for job descriptions and postings, recruitment, screening, testing, and selection should be standardized so each department can plug and play to facilitate equitable hiring practices.

Regarding collaboration, scholarship illuminates the ways homologous hiring committees detrimentally impact minorities because they create homologous outputs (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). As delineated in the findings, Team A primarily creates job description and posting content, screen, test, and evaluate candidates using very few hiring committee members, resulting in homologous reproduction. Thus, every hiring process should promote diversity in thought through involving multiple hiring committee members. On top of that, considering the majority of people of color in Team A are situated as coordinators, with no hiring responsibilities, consider the ways they can be involved with hiring practices (e.g., recruitment strategies, sit in on interviews,

evaluation) as this can aid in preventing homologous outputs. Fundamentally, collaborative hiring processes inherently promote equity through the diversity of thought.

Procedurally, this hiring manual should build upon the existing best practices document, containing systematic protocol and resources for each element in the hiring process. Informed by the current case study findings, each component should be created toward equity – redressing wrongs. The forthcoming list is an example of how each hiring process component can be addressed.

1. Job Description and Posting Creation: Working from the “Job Description Template” Frank has already created, this section of the hiring manual should explain the ways the job description template should be operationalized. On top of that, it should be required for HR to approve job posting content before it’s posted.
2. Job Postings: The best practices document recommends job openings be posted on diverse networking sites, with no further detail. Thus, the hiring manual should provide an all-encompassing list of the required websites jobs must routinely be posted on, including diversity-oriented websites toward race (e.g., HBCUConnect and Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities, etc.) (Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018).
3. Screening: Job applications should be screened based on the ways the job description compares to applicant materials (e.g., resume, cover letter, etc.). Thus, a formal grading protocol to assess job applications should draw directly from the competencies and experience listed on the job posting.

Originally an excel document, an example screening tool is located in Appendix 7.1.

4. SparkHire Interviews: When constructing the interview protocol for this one-way testing format, interview questions should draw from the “roles, responsibilities, and essential functions” of the job posting to assess the candidate's skill set. In turn, the SparkHire screening tool should assess applicants based on such criteria. An example of a SparkHire evaluation tool is located in Appendix 7.2.
5. Zoom Interviews: All candidates reaching the point of Zoom interviews should be qualified, however, to identify the most qualified candidate through an objective lens, hiring personnel should ask questions related to candidates' experience in relation to the “roles and responsibilities” listed on the job description. In this, a formal interview protocol consisting of problem-solving, scenario, and experiential-based questions can demonstrate candidates' ability to carry out the essential functions of the role. An example of such evaluation tool is provided in Appendix 7.3.
6. Selection: The top candidate should be selected by adding candidate scores from each succession and convening with the hiring committee to discuss scores and reach a consensus regarding the final candidate for the role.

Drawing from the current study's findings, these procedures eliminated the salience of agency producing subjective practices, siloed processes, subjective interview practices, and evaluation practices based on behavioral and cultural characteristics (Hurd

et al., 2020; Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018; Picardi, 2019). In addition, through providing a formal protocol for hiring through a structured document, objectivity and equity are promoted. For example, all screening and evaluation processes draw directly from the HR-approved job posting. However, this hiring system must be established through training hiring personnel, which will further alleviate variability and subjectivity in practices.

Recommendation 2.1: Toward Equity: Establish Formal Systems Through Race-Conscious Hiring Training

As delineated in the findings, in instances when formal guidance for hiring was provided, many participants didn't operationalize them accordingly and used self-induced hiring strategies. In response, the researcher proposes all hiring personnel be required to complete an in-house certification hiring training. Drawing from the hiring manual, Team A's HR staff, external DEI consultants, and scholars should construct a hands-on hiring training to institutionalize the ways hiring practices should be employed.

On top of that, considering Team A's racialized hiring patterns, hiring training should give special attention to race through a module oriented toward race. Informed by the current study, this module should illuminate Team A's historic racialized tendencies and provide strategies to counter them. Similar to the ways leadership was enlightened, this module should specifically (a) spark racial consciousness through revealing the ways racial inequity has been (re)produced through their hiring practices, and (b) strategies toward racial equity (e.g., following the hiring manual, minimizing fit, monitoring biases,

etc). Through this process, hiring personnel practices will shift from *color-blind*, *color-mute*, and *race-neutral* toward *race-conscious* (Cooper et al., 2017).

As aforementioned, hiring training should be developed and conducted collaboratively with Team A's HR staff, Chief of Staff, and external DEI consultants and scholars. Considering the ways NGBs are run (high-paced, overworked staff), hiring training should be adapted to varying methods, including face-to-face and pre-recorded video to promote accessibility. However, the researcher suggests hiring managers in each department should be required to partake in face-to-face (in-person or Zoom) training to obtain their hiring certification. Concerning hiring committee members, hiring managers must instruct them to complete training via an interactive pre-recorded video followed by an assessment tool (e.g., exam). This assessment tool should measure participants' retention of the hiring training content, granting certification. In summation, the researcher recommends that Team A's hiring personnel be certified to partake in hiring activities.

Recommendation 3: Toward Equity | Proactive Race-Conscious Recruitment

The current study revealed that Team A's hiring practices are "reactive" and "rushed," with the tendency to hire through familiar networks. Considering racial inequity, hiring reactively and rushed inherently causes Team A to recruit through their routine homologous networks, reproducing the status quo. To address this inequitable system, the researcher recommends establishing recruitment strategies oriented toward people of color. In doing so, when Team A hires reactively and rushed, people of color

will inherently be included in the hiring pool due to the establishment of these proactive measures.

Team A's attraction and recruitment efforts are primarily limited to job postings through local and national job posting websites, which don't aid in attracting and recruiting people of color (Jana & Diaz-Mejias, 2018). Thus, the researcher recommends Team A diversify its methods by establishing various strategies toward race (Arthur, 2015; Hollenbeck et al., 2015; Hurd et al., 2020). As participants suggested, Team A routinely lacks racial diversity in applicants. Through establishing such mechanisms, Team A's visibility will increase amongst people of color.

As mentioned in Recommendation 2, the researcher suggests all jobs be posted on diversity and race-oriented websites, including HBCUConnect, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and Diversity Job Board. As a result, individuals from racially diverse backgrounds will inherently be engaged, bridging the gap between people of color and Team A. Furthermore, as an organization with no recruitment strategies, we recommend Team A create a DEI network through developing relationships with (a) sport management programs at racial minority institutions (HBCUs, HACUs), (b) DEI affinity groups at colleges and universities, (c) and racial minority professional organizations (Black fraternities and sororities; Black Ski Professionals and SnowSports Instructors; National Association of Black Physical Therapists, etc.). The purpose of developing a DEI network with these race-related organizations is to increase Team A's visibility toward people of color, placing more people of color in the hiring pool, ultimately developing a pipeline of people of color into Team A.

Using the DEI committee, these two-way relationships should include Team A sparking introductory conversations laying out the purpose of the relationship followed by the ways in which Team A can partner with the entity through guest speaking, participating in job fairs, creating industry-based projects for students, including them in Team A events, and sending them job postings directly. For example, a byproduct of developing these relationships should consist of Team A creating a listserv for all DEI partners, streamlining communication.

Through posting jobs on diverse websites and developing relationships with racial minority communities, Team A will increase their visibility amongst people of color. Specifically, these strategies aid in bridging the gap between Team A and people of color, which will influence the racial demographic of their applicant pool. Furthermore, considering the nature of Team A's hiring as reactive and fast, establishing proactive racialized strategies promotes inclusion and equity, with racial diversity being an output (Fernandez & Mors, 2008; Hurd et al., 2020; Kmec, 2006).

Race and organizational scholar Victor Ray (2019b) states that "organizations that are serious about changing patterns of racial inequality need to move beyond diversity and inclusion and toward reparations and restitution" (para. 9). In other words, organizations should move toward redressing inequities by implementing equitable practices and intentionally creating opportunities for racial minorities (Bernstein et al., 2020). Notable organizations that have operationalized Ray's (2019b) sentiments are Deloitte, Tesla, and Foot Locker (Fortune, 2019; Verry & Abel, 2021). So, through Team

A implementing proactive recruitment strategies oriented toward people of color, they will move toward equity, also operationalizing Ray's (2019b) sentiments.

Recommendation 4: Toward Equity | Critical Reconsideration of Job Requirements

According to the current study, Team A perceives the primary contributors to their racial diversity challenges, including the culture of snow sports and their headquarters. Thus, the discussion illuminated the ways such macro-factors can influence the meso-level. Considering this insight, the researcher recommends Team A critically reconsider the identified job requirements and preferences.

SnowSports Industries America is a research organization responsible for producing an annual nationwide participation survey on SnowSports in America, detailing the demographic makeup of winter sports activities (SIA, 2020). According to the most recent report (2019-20), White people comprise 67.5% of winter snow sports participation. While the Hispanic (14%), Asian (7.7%), (Black 9.2%) populations are the minority in winter snow sports, confirming participants' perceptions regarding the "cultural impact" of the sport (SIA, 2020). Given this convergence of data, the researcher recommends Team A critically consider which roles require a proclivity toward the sport.

Throughout the study, interview and document data suggested the need for critical thinking in job requirements. Particularly, a participant provided insight into a job posting that required an inclination toward the sport through negating this necessity for that particular role. In turn, the researcher suggests hiring committees consider omitting this as a preference or requirement if it isn't necessary to carry out the functions of the role.

For example, through examining the roles, responsibilities, and essential functions of the “administrative coordinator” role in the events department, the researcher suggests a propensity toward the sport is unnecessary, despite being listed as a sought-out attribute. In summation, considering how a proclivity toward the sport operates as racialized, the researcher recommends hiring committees critically reconsider including this on job postings.

Another racialized requirement that Team A should reconsider is the job location. In Chapter 4, participants perceived the location of Team A’s headquarters as influential to their racial diversity challenges. Further, through reviewing job postings, the researcher identified that Team A’s job postings include this location, despite organizational members stating some departments currently operate remotely. In fact, some participants indicated that Team A is flexible in modality as many employees work remotely. Given this variation within Team A and how their headquarters location operates as a racialized requirement privileging Whiteness, the researcher recommends that Team A critically consider if emerging roles can be effectively conducted remotely.

As an output of COVID-19, Team A actively allows employees to work remotely, which aligns with recent scholarship illuminating how COVID-19 has shifted perceptions toward working remotely due to its effective and efficient nature (Hickman & Robison, 2020). Considering the headquarters location is 86% White, indicating roles as remote can be advantageous to Team A. In other words, location will no longer detrimentally affect their recruiting pool, with remote roles potentially attracting a more racially diverse hiring pool.

Recognizing this recommendation of reconsidering job requirements won't apply to all roles (e.g., athletics), placing a critical lens on these items counters racialized practices oriented toward Whiteness. For example, the researcher recommends Team A promote inclusivity in their requirements by considering how the transferability of skills of individuals from other Olympic sports (e.g., cycling, skateboarding, figure skating, etc.) can be advantageous to Team A. Further, given the demographic makeup of winter sports participants in the United States and Team A's headquarters, eliminating these requirements facilitates a more equitable hiring process, ultimately attracting more people of color to Team A's hiring pool. For these reasons, the researcher recommends hiring personnel place a critical lens on their job requirements, determining essential requirements for each role.

Recommendation 5: Toward Equity | The Social Construction of Fit: Rethink the "fit"

When selecting the top candidate, Team A's hiring personnel has indicated perceived fit as a salient indicator. In response, the discussion criticized this tendency by describing how Team A's behavioral and cultural conceptualizations of fit were subjective, inherently (re)producing racial inequity. Given this critique, the researcher contends hiring committees must critically consider the ways fit is socially constructed and who's responsible for perceiving such fit.

Building upon existing scholarship, the current study identified the ways Team A conceptualized fit operates as racialized signals due to its behavioral and cultural undertones (Picardi, 2019). In response, the researcher proposes an alternative way "fit" should be operationalized – *through the lens of the candidate*. Because signals operate

two-ways with employers and candidates sending signals to each other, candidates perceive the ways they fit into roles and organizations (Spence, 1973). In an effort to counter Team A's tendency to perceive candidates "fit" through subjective lenses, the researcher recommends hiring committees eliminate "perceived fit" as an indicator for selection. In turn, hiring personnel's primary responsibility will be to identify the most qualified candidate for the role, while the job seeker perceives how they fit into the role, department, and organization.

Summary

Mayorga-Gallo (2019) states, "when representation is the most important measure of fairness, it is proposed as the solution to structurally embedded issues of inequity and power" (p. 1793). Throughout the sport industry, affirmative action policies, notably the Rooney Rule, have been proposed as a solution to racially inequitable systems. In response, tokenism is present, serving as a smokescreen obscuring the system. As the hope is for sport organizations to consist of racially diverse staff, the true measure of fairness is revealed through systems and structures. With respect to Team A's racial diversity challenges, by adjusting organizational mechanisms (e.g., hiring practices, development practices, retention practices, organizational culture) toward equity, a racially diverse staff will be an inevitable output.

Implications

The current study's findings have notable implications for scholars, educators, and practitioners situated in sport management. First, regarding sport management education, the inequitable and poor HRM practices demonstrated by Team A suggest a

necessity for HRM curricula in sport management programs. On the other end of the spectrum, HRM education must emphasize DEI and the ways inequities can be (re)produced through hiring practices. Additionally, Team A's race-related insight suggests a need for cultural competence courses and training in sport management programs and sport organizational structures.

Regarding academia, the current study demonstrates the importance of investigating the 'meso' organizational level when exploring issues of DEI in sport organizations, as they are fundamental in constructing racial inequities. Building upon the current study, the researcher calls for sport scholars to continue to draw from organizational scholars such as Ray (2019) to explore the ways in which sport organizational structures operate as racialized. Additionally, the researcher calls for sport and HRM scholars to further examine DEI-related issues throughout the USOPC and its respective NGBs and HPMOs. For example, the idea of color-muteness has not been contextualized in HRM and sport scholarship to explore the ways it manifests in organizations. Thus, future research should build on the current study to address related issues.

Limitations & Future Research

The current study was afforded the unique opportunity to investigate one of the underperforming Olympic-level sport organizations hiring practices to identify various ways racial inequity may be (re)produced. As a result, the researcher identified multiple forms of racial inequity within Team A's hiring practices and provided practical recommendations toward equity. However, despite solving the case study, it contained notable limitations that should be addressed in future research.

First, the current study's case was one of the 30 underperforming Olympic-level sport organizations. Although the findings provided unique insight, they shouldn't be generalized across all underperforming Olympic-level sport organizations as they contain differing contexts. Thus, future research should explore other underperforming Olympic-level sport organizations hiring practices to learn about the ways racial inequity may be (re)produced through quantitative and qualitative methods. For example, the researcher will be conducting a similar study on another underperforming Olympic-level sport organization's hiring practices in Spring 2022.

Regarding methodology, the current study was qualitative, using the case study design through interviews and documents to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Team A's hiring practices. To further the analysis, future research should employ different qualitative designs such as action research, which involves taking and evaluating action based on the data collected. On the other end of the spectrum, quantitative methods including surveys and questionnaires would be useful to obtain insight from a wide range of hiring personnel. For example, future research should include quantitative methods to gather data on multiple underperforming Olympic-level sport organizations.

Considering the qualitative methodology and recruitment strategy, the researcher attempted to obtain balanced insight through speaking with representatives from all eight of Team A's departments. However, two departments were unresponsive and in turn, weren't included in the current study. Further, all participants have held the role of the hiring manager within their respective departments. Thus, future research should make a

greater attempt to capture multi-leveled hiring personnel in their data set. Furthermore, when conducting research on Olympic-level sport organizations, researchers must remain cognizant of the nature of NGBs in relation to the timing of data collection. For instance, in the current study, IRB approval coincided with the Beijing Winter Olympics, which may have influenced participation. Because of this timing conflict, the researcher's key gatekeeper experienced difficulty reaching possible participants. Thus, researchers exploring the Olympic movement must consider the ways its innate nature may influence the data collection and analysis process.

Another important consideration is the ongoing pandemic, which primarily influenced participant recruitment and data collection in the current study. Because much of Team A's staff works remote, the key gatekeeper relied on recruiting candidates via email, without the ability to establish rapport through face to face interactions. In fact, a few participants mentioned that they have never met the key gatekeeper, Frank, due to the pandemic. Thus, considering the lack of face-to-face interactions within Team A due to the pandemic, participant participation may have been influenced.

Next, the racial identity of all of the current study's participants was White, serving as a limitation for various reasons. First, considering the researcher's positionality – a Black woman interviewing White participants – the ways the researcher's identity may have influenced participants insight must be considered. Drawing from the “race of interviewer effect” (Cotter et al., 1982, p.1), the researcher perceived participant's responses to race-related questions as an attempt to (a) avoid offending the researcher, (b) prove they weren't racist, (c) and expound upon the ways in which they perceive the

organization as racially progressive. Additionally, the researcher suggests participants' tendency to provide "one-word" responses coupled with deep thought and elongated pauses when responding to race-related questions demonstrated a level of discomfort and "incoherence" (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2006, p.27) to such subjects, which was evident through participants providing limited insight into the matter.

Moreover, because no people of color situated in Team A met the inclusion criteria, the current study was limited to insight from the privileged demographic. Thus, future research should seek ways supplementary data can be attained from staff of color. For example, drawing from the researcher's first-hand experience, although she wasn't involved in hiring practices at USA Fencing, she observed the ways organizational personnel routinely operationalized cronyism and nepotism, (re)producing racial inequity. Following that approach, future research should seek to include people of color in data collection in such ways.

Finally, as scholarship attributes the lack of racial diversity in organizations to micro, meso, and macro practices, the current study focused on the meso-level mechanism of hiring practices. Considering this conglomerate, future research should pursue additional meso-level factors including, retention practices, development practices, and organizational culture. Through investigating these factors, a comprehensive account of the ways racial inequity is (re)produced through organizational mechanisms is revealed. For example, as next steps, the researcher can explore Team A's retention practices, development practices, and organizational culture to learn about the

ways racial inequity may be (re)produced, providing a holistic picture of racial inequity within Team A's organizational structure.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: IRB Approval Letter



January 28, 2022

Ashley Cae Gardner,
UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Kinesiology, Recreation and

Re: UTK IRB-21-06733-XP
Study Title: An Exploration of the Hiring Practices of an Olympic-Level Sport Organization: A Case Study

Dear Ashley Cae Gardner:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for the above referenced project. It determined that your application is eligible for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), expedited category 6: Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes and expedited category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

The IRB has reviewed these materials and determined that they do comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval by the IRB of your application (version 1.2) as submitted, including:

- Informed Consent Staff v 1.0
- Informed Consent Organization v 1.0
- Organizational Willingness Letter v 1.0
- Interview guide_Diss v 1.0

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697 865-974-7400 fax irb.utk.edu

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Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System

Appendix 2: Recruitment Emails

Researcher Recruitment Script for An Exploration of the hiring practices of an Olympic-level sport organization: A case study

All:

A PHD student with the University of Tennessee – Knoxville, Ashley Gardner, has contacted our DEI working group and has asked for some assistance with a research project that she is working on. Ashley is looking to set up interviews with those involved with hiring at [Team A]. I have you included on this email as you play a role in recruiting and hiring in your area.

Here is some information on the student and the proposed research:

Bio: *Ashley Gardner is a doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville that conducts research on issues related to human resource management in sport organizations and diversity, equity, and inclusion in sport organizations. Ashley worked for USA Fencing as the National Events Coordinator 2017-19 and is now passionate about using research as a tool to promote equity in Olympic-level sport organizations' hiring practices. More information on Ashley can be found here: <https://krss.utk.edu/graduate/current-doctoral-students/>*

The Purpose of the Study: *to learn about [Team A] hiring practices. This includes insight related to the hiring process, procedures, and strategies.*

Participants: *Individuals that have been or are involved with [Team A's] hiring practices*

Action Steps: *Contact Ashley for further information and next steps. Interviews are looking to be scheduled soon. Email Ashley at your earliest convenience to obtain further information and provide your best availability agardn25@vols.utk.edu.*

Researcher Recruitment Script for An Exploration of the hiring practices of an Olympic-level sport organization: A case study

Dear [insert prospective participant's first name here],

Hello! I am conducting a research study that focuses on the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization and the ways in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity. Since your organization has identified you as involved with the organizational hiring practices, I would like to interview you about their hiring practices. Your participation would consist of two interviews lasting approximately one hour each, which can be conducted at a time of your convenience via

video conferencing over the computer. If you agree to participate in this study, please review the attached consent form and return a signed copy. Once I receive the signed copy, I will contact you to schedule the interview. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (you can find my contact information below).

Thank you,

Ashley Gardner (principal investigator)
PhD Student, Graduate Teaching Associate
University of Tennessee
agardn25@vols.utk.edu
708-983-3296

Appendix 3: Informed Consent Form

Consent for Research Participation

Research Study Title: An exploration of the hiring practices of an Olympic-level sport organization: A case study

Researcher(s): Ashley Gardner (principal investigator) Dr. Adam Love (advisor), Dr. Steven Waller (advisor)

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

The researcher is asking you to be in this research study because your organization has identified you as involved with organizational hiring practices.

What is this research study about?

The purpose of this study is to seek an understanding of the hiring practices of an underperforming Olympic-level sport organization and the ways in which these hiring practices may (re)produce racial inequity.

How long will I be in the research study?

If you agree to be in the study, your participation will last until March 2022.

What will happen if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research study”?

If you agree to be in this study, the researcher will ask you to participate in the interviews via videoconferencing software (e.g., Zoom). The interviews will be recorded for research purposes, and the researchers will produce a written transcript of your interview. After the interview, you will have the opportunity to review and revise the interview transcript for accuracy and clarity.

What happens if I say “No, I do not want to be in this research study”?

Being in this study is up to you. You can say no now or leave the study later. Either way, your decision won't affect your relationship with the researcher.

What happens if I say “Yes” but change my mind later?

Even if you decide to be in the study now, you can change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to stop before the study is completed, we will delete the recording of your interview, and your responses will not be used in the study. However, after data analysis is complete, you can no longer request that your data be removed from the study.

Are there any possible risks to me?

It is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but we believe this risk is small because of the procedures we use to protect your information. These procedures are described later in this form. In addition, it is possible that some questions during the interview may cause psychological discomfort.

However, you will not be pressured to provide any information that you are not comfortable disclosing.

Are there any benefits to being in this research study?

Your participation may help us to learn more about the ways in which hiring practices may reproduce racial inequities. On a larger scale, your participation may provide awareness to the Olympic movement in hopes of a shift toward equity within hiring practices.

Who can see or use the information collected for this research study?

We will protect the confidentiality of your information by storing the interview data securely so that only members of the research team will have access to it.

If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be used.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what information came from you. Although it is unlikely, there are times when others may need to see the information we collect about you. These include:

- People at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville who oversee research to make sure it is conducted properly.
- Government agencies (such as the Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and others responsible for watching over the safety, effectiveness, and conduct of the research.
- If a law or court requires us to share the information, we would have to follow that law or final court ruling.

What will happen to my information after this study is over?

We will keep your information to use for future research. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from your research data collected as part of the study.

We will not share your research data with other researchers.

Who can answer my questions about this research study?

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem or injury, contact the researcher or the advisor:

Researcher: Ashley Gardner, agardn25@vols.utk.edu, 708-983-3296

Advisor: Dr. Adam Love, alove1@utk.edu, 865-974-5291

Advisor: Dr. Steven Waller, swaller2@utk.edu, 865-974-1279

For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

1534 White Avenue

Blount Hall, Room 408
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
Phone: 865-974-7697
Email: utkirb@utk.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By signing this document, I am agreeing to be in this study. I will receive a copy of this document after I sign it.

Name of Adult Participant
Date

Signature of Adult Participant

Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the study to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to be in the study.

Name of Research Team Member

Signature of Research Team Member Date

Appendix 4: Participants

Pseudo nym	Pronouns	Racial & Gender Identity	Department	Organizational Role	Years Employed	Nature of Hiring Involvement	# of hiring processes
Frank	he/him	White male	Human Resources	Director of Human Resources	Less than a year	Hiring manager	5-6 processes
Wolverine	he/him	White male	Information Technology	Chief Technology Officer, Head of competition services	3.5 years	Hiring manager	3 processes
Stevie	she/her	White female	High Performance	Director of Sport Science	16 years	Hiring manager	5-6 processes
Falcon	he/him	White male	Athletics	Cross Country Program Director (Previous roles: head coach & development)	21 years	Hiring manager & committee member	3-6 processes
Snowshoes	he/him	White male	Finance	Financial controller & Director of Accounting	1 year	Hiring manager	2-3 processes
SB	he/him	White male	Events	Senior Director of Events	26 years	Hiring manager	12 processes
Fred	he/him	White male	High Performance (Athletics previously)	Senior Manager of Performance and Data Analytics	4 years	Hiring manager & committee member	3-5 processes

				(Coach, Data Analyst, Data Manager)			
Spector	He/him	White male	High Performance	High Performance Manager	5 years	Hiring manager & committee member	8-10 processes

Appendix 5: Interview Protocol

An Exploration of the Hiring Practices of an Olympic-Level Sport Organization: A Case Study

Interview protocol

Introductory Interview: The purpose of this interview is to establish rapport. The interview will consist of an introductory conversation in which the researcher thoroughly explains the nature of the study while gathering the participants' involvement with the organization's hiring practices.

Item 1: Researcher & Participant Introduction

Item 2: Researcher explaining the purpose of the study

Item 3: A discussion regarding protection, privacy & pseudonyms

Item 4: Participant Concerns/Questions

Item 5: The nature of participant involvement with the organization's hiring practices (e.g., In what ways are you involved with the organization's hiring practices? How many hiring processes have you been part of?, etc.)

Hiring Practices Interview: The purpose of this interview is to address the purpose of the study. This interview will consist of asking interview questions directly related to the study

I will begin the interviews by explaining to participants that the purpose of this research involves learning about the organization's hiring practices. I will then proceed by asking open-ended questions/prompts regarding the methods and strategies employed to hire such as:

1. Hiring Practices
 - a. Can you describe your complete hiring procedures from human resource planning to selection?
 - i. What is the process of constructing job descriptions and job announcements?
 - ii. In what ways do you recruit?
 - iii. In what ways do you screen applicants prior to interviews?
 - iv. Can you describe your interview process?
 - v. In what ways do you assess and select candidates? What factors are considered when making a final hiring decision?
 - vi. Are there any additional hiring practices your organization employ to attract and select applicants?
2. Race-related questions
 - a. Considering the scorecard data and the lack of people of color situated in your organization, what contributory factors do you think are relevant?

- b. Do you think the hiring practices may contribute to the lack of racial diversity within your organization? If so, in what ways?
- c. In what ways is race considered throughout the hiring process?
 - i. Attraction & Recruitment
 - ii. Screening & Interviewing
 - iii. Selection
- d. As a member of the hiring committee, are conversations about race present throughout the hiring process?
- e. Do conversations regarding fit arise among the hiring committee throughout the hiring process?
 - i. How do you distinguish someone that fits?

Based on participants' responses to each question, I will proceed with follow-up questions. Each time participants mention a new issue, I will ask follow up questions, such as "as a member of the hiring committee, are there any formal processes enacted to monitor racial biases?". Once I have reached information redundancy about the general topic of hiring practices and the relevance of race in the hiring process, the interview will be complete

Appendix 6: Documents & Archival Records

Item	Organizational Document	Provided by
1	2017-20 Diversity Plan	Frank
2	Job Description Template	Frank
3	Best Practice Hiring Guide for Managers	Frank
4	Current Employee Demographics	Frank
5	Team A DEI Statement	Frank
6	Organizational Chart	Frank
7	Job Description (Software Developer)	Publicly available
8	Job Description (Senior Manager of Social Media)	Publicly available
9	Job Description (Human Resource Generalist)	Publicly available
10	Job Description (Administrative Coordinator, Events)	Publicly available
11	Historical demographic data	Publicly available
12	Presentation Case Study Template	Stevie
13	Sample Interview Questions	Stevie
14	Screening Tool w/hiring manager feedback	Stevie
15	Screening Tool Template	Stevie

Appendix 7.1: Job Application Screening Tool Example

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
Competencies & Experience	Points	Applicant A	Applicant B
Item A	1	1	
Item B	1		
Item C	1	1	1
Item D	1	1	1
Item E	1	1	1
Total	5	4	3

Instructions: In Column A, place the core competencies and experience from the job description.

In Column B, indicate the number of points each competency is worth. Beyond Column B, applicants should be scored determined by the ways their application materials aligns with the competencies and experience required. Applicants with the top scores should move on to the next round.

Appendix 7.2: Spark Hire Interview Evaluation Tool Example

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
Roles, Responsibilities, and Essential Functions	Points	Applicant A	Applicant B
Item A	1	1	1
Item B	1	1	
Item C	1	1	1
Item D	1	1	1
Item E	1	1	1
Total	5	5	4

Instructions: In Column A, insert the various roles and responsibilities from the job description.

In Column B, indicate the number of points each item should be scaled. Beyond Column B, applicants should be scored by the ways interviewees communicate proficiency in each item.

Applicants with the top scores should move on to the next round.

Appendix 7.3: Zoom or In-Person Interview Evaluation Tool Example

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E
Roles, Responsibilities & Essential Functions	Questions	Points	Applicant A	Applicant B
Item A	Question A	1	1	
Item B	Question B	1		
Item C	Question C	1		
Item D	Question D	1	1	1
Item E	Question E	1	1	1
Total		5	3	2

Instructions: In Column A, insert the roles, responsibilities, and essential functions. In Column B, insert interview questions addressing the criterion. In Column C, indicate the number of points each item should be scaled. Beyond Column C, applicants should be scored determined by the ways interviewees communicate proficiency in each item. Applicants with the top scores should be considered as the top candidate for the role.

Appendix 8: Screenshot of NVivo File

Coding Cycle 1 (Structural, In Vivo, and Evaluation Coding)

Name	Files	Refer...
☐ Job Descriptions	8	22
☐ Attraction & Recruitment	8	24
☐ Screening	8	22
☐ Selection	8	33
☐ Testing	8	35
☐ Race	8	44

Appendix 9: Codebook

RQ	Theme	Detailed definition
RQ1	Job Description and Posting Creation is a "Moving Target"	Because of the high turnover rate of HR, the process for creating job descriptions and postings frequently changes. Thus, data demonstrated variability amongst the ways job descriptions and postings are created because of this "moving target". This was demonstrated through the majority of job postings reviewed not following the template and participants describing the self-induced strategies they employ. Further, inconsistencies within job postings were identified when triangulating interview data with document data.
RQ1	A Proclivity Toward Familiar Professional Networks	Participant and document data suggests Team A relies on familiar professional networks to attract and recruit applicants. Despite the best practices document instructing hiring managers to post jobs on "diverse websites", all participants indicated jobs are posted locally (community colleges, universities, media), outdoor sport specific (Malakye), their website, and general networking sites (LinkedIn, Indeed, Monster). Further, participants draw from individuals already within their professional network (coaches, interns, athletes).
RQ1	Unstructured Screening Process	Participant insight and documents revealed the lack of structure for screening applicants. According to document data, no direction from HR is given regarding how to screen applicants. Thus, many participants screen applicants using self-induced strategies. For example, 1/6 departments indicated they utilize a formal screening system while the

		remaining hiring managers screen applicants varying ways.
RQ1	Subjectivity & Variability in Interview Practices	Participants and documents suggested interviews as the prominent testing practice as all participants test candidates using interviews. Considering no direction for interviewing is given from HR, the ways in which participants construct interview questions, conduct interviews and evaluate interviews vary by department, whose practices are subjective.
RQ1	The Salience and Variability of Fit	When selecting the top candidate, all participants described the salience of fit. However, their conceptualizations of fit varied, primarily with subjective connotations.
RQ2	Irrelevance of Race in Hiring Practices	Many participants suggested race is irrelevant in hiring practices as they don't have any race-related conversations, considerations, or actions. Similarly, documents don't address race in hiring.

Appendix 10: Codes to Categories to Themes Example from Codebook

Coding Cycle 2: (Focused Coding)

Selection
"Experience to job function" (Frank, p.5, line 87)
"Interview performance" (Frank, p.5, line 91)
"Does this person meet our high performance philosophy, our culture" (Fred, p.3, line 50)
"Fit for the role" (Fred, p.3, line 54)
Fit: "can you sit with this person and airport for six hours? " "Character" (Fred, p.3, line 57)
Fit: "Demeanor", "Work ethic" "Skillset" (SB, p.6, line 87)
"How are they going to fit with the group dynamic" (SB, p.7, line 89)
"if they fit, understand accounting, if they understand how systems work, if they want to grow and develop" (Snowshoes, p.8, line 101)
"We value culture highly" (Spector, p.4, line 53)
Fit: "best person that will at least enjoy the role, enjoy our culture, and add something to it as opposed to just fit in and be a yes person" (Spector)
"Fit, High performance philosophy", cultural addition" (Stevie, p.9, line 127)
"Cultural add" (Spector, p.3, line 61)

"We look at all stages of interviews" (Stevie, p.8, line 113)
"Ability to build relationships" (Stevie, p.9, line 130)
"I have my personal opinion of a person and then it's really just bouncing it off the other person." (SB, p.4, line 73)
"How's that person going to fit in?" (SB, p.4, line, 80)
"Demeanor" (SB, p.4, line 80)
"Two people prioritizing who would be the best fit for that role" (SB, p.5, line 91)
"Experience" (Snowshoes, p.3, line 44)
"Ability to communicate and get along with people" (Snowshoes, p.3, line 47)
"How well they fit with the team" (Snowshoes, p.3, line 49)
"We rank the candidates but we don't have a scale" (Snowshoes, p.4, line 61)
"Collaborative in the final rounds" (Spector, p.2, line 58)
Fit: "Likeability, vibes, interactions, culture" (Wolverine, p.6, line 69)
"Minimum 3 people in final decision" (Spector, p.5, line 67)
"Compare answers from each succession (Wolverine, p.4, line 81)
"Behaviors" (Stevie, p.8, line 115)
" I'm still gonna choose the person who's the best fit with the position based on what we've outlined in the job description" (Frank, p.7, line 111)
"You don't have to have those skills to start with, you have to be a good person first." (Falcon, p.4, line 54)

“Fit means Hungry to learn” (Falcon, p.5, line 59)
Fit: "Modesty is in the conversation, Having a growth mindset is part of the conversation. Excitement. Passion, is in the conversation. " (Falcon, p.5, line 62)
Categories
Interview performance
The importance of fit
Varying conceptualizations of fit
Subjective criterion: Fit, culture, behaviors
Theme
The Salience and Variability of Fit
When selecting the top candidate, all participants described the salience of fit. However, their conceptualizations of fit varied, with subjective connotations.

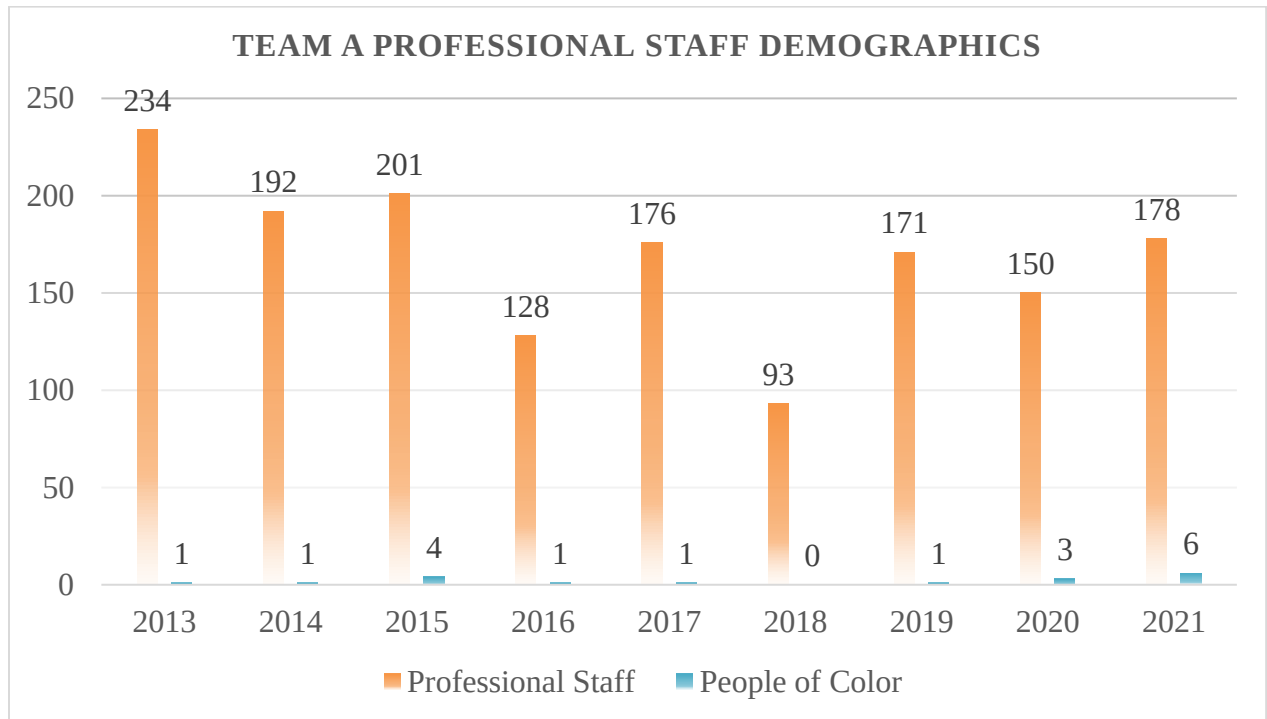
Appendix 11: Document Analysis from Codebook

Documents	Code
Best Practices for Hiring	1. Step by step, 2. Lack of detailed direction
Job Description Template	3. Outline for job descriptions with major components the posting should consist of: job title, classification, location, travel, summary, roles and responsibilities, additional duties, essential functions, competencies and experience, supervisory responsibilities, physical requirements, and an Equal Employer Opportunity Statement
Job Descriptions/Postings (4)	4. 3/4 job postings didn't follow the template 5. Commonalities included Experience, education/location/affinity toward winter snow sports
Candidate Screening Tools	6. DEI Candidates
DEI Statement	7. No mention of race
DEI Action plan	8. No consideration or strategies oriented toward race
Themes	Definition
Lack of Formal Direction and Systems in Hiring Process	No detailed direction given for the procedural components within the best practices document
Lack of Implementing formal structures	Many postings didn't follow the template
Ignorance of race	Documents failed to address race or race in hiring.

Appendix 12: Triangulation from Codebook

Triangulation (Themes): Document themes	
Lack of Formal Direction and Systems in Hiring Process	No detailed direction given for the procedural components within the best practices document, confirming participant insight & interview themes: Unstructured screening process, Variation & Subjectivity in Interview Practices, Job Description and Posting Creation is a "Moving Target"
Lack of Implementing formal structures	Many of the reviewed job postings didn't follow the job description template, confirming the interview theme: Job Description and Posting Creation is a "Moving Target"
Ignorance of race	Both DEI documents didn't address race or race in hiring, confirming the interview theme: The Irrelevance of Race in Hiring

Appendix 13: Team A Professional Staff Demographics (2013-21)



VITA

Originally from the Chicago-land area, Ashley Gardner attended Crete-Monee High School and played basketball. Drawing from this love of basketball, Ashley pursued her bachelor of science degree in sport management at Hampton University. Immediately after her undergraduate studies, she earned her Masters of Arts in Kinesiology, with a sport management specialization, from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Next, Ashley used her earned degrees by working for USA Fencing as the National Events Coordinator for two years. Drawing from observations and experiences within the Olympic movement, Ashley decided to pursue her PhD in Sport Studies to use research as a tool to address these issues. In response, her research agenda is centered around race-related DEI issues in sport organizations. After graduation, she will work in academia, continuing to use research as a tool to address issues in sport organizations.