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## *Black on White :* **Race, Representation and the Sporting Press**

Increasingly critical race scholarship has engaged Whiteness as a politically meaningful construct in need of analysis, contestation and transformation. This recent work builds upon an established body of criticism written and enacted by people of color including the works of W.E.B. Dubois, James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison. This unmasking of Whiteness continues in the writings of such cultural critics as bell hooks, Cornell West and Stuart Hall. Collectively these writings seek to expose the political workings of the dominant US culture specifically challenging ideas reproduced in mainstream accounts that suggest only people of color are raced. Historians have contributed greatly to this body of literature documenting the ways White identities have been created historically while noting the impact of racial meanings and privileges in the lives of so-called Whites and how Whiteness seeks to place People of Color on the margins of social life. As many historians have demonstrated, Whiteness does not refer to an essence, nor a fixed set of characteristics. Rather, Whiteness often suggests a strategic deployment of power and is thus a relational category constructed through historically specific discursive practices that seek to shape identities and life chances. According to John Fiske, in the mainstream the power of Whiteness lies in a complicated process and a set of techniques called exnomination, naturalization and universalization. Exnomination is the power not to be named. Naturalization is the process through which Whites seek to establish themselves as the cultural norm. Universalization suggests that the worldviews of Whites should represent the dominant understanding of any given event or situation.

While this scholarship clearly demonstrates the historical forces that create and shape Whiteness, increasingly critical race relations scholars have sought to complicate monolithic understandings by provide more complicated accounts of the ways in which Whiteness is linked to gender and class. In this paper I provide an overview of key historical writings concerning the social construction of Whiteness. Next, I apply this critical race relations scholarship to explore representations to Whiteness as it is articulated to gender and class in sport settings. Specifically this paper explores representations of Whiteness in basketball exhibition contests featuring Black and White teams competing against each other in the 1920s and the 1930s. Newspaper accounts from the African American and the White press provide the basis for this analysis. By exploring the dominant discourses connected to Whiteness in these divergent newspaper accounts, I hope to show the ways in which Whiteness is often represented differently in the Black press and in the White press. Thus, this paper demonstrates the ways the sporting accounts of Whiteness work within a shifting, unstable site of gender, racial and economic privilege and contestation.