

**SUPER BOWL XXXVI AND THE NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS: A CRITICAL  
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF WHITE-FRAMED NARRATIVES OF PATRIOTISM  
POST-9/11**

A Thesis

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Across the dominant sport discourse in the U.S., it's generally agreed upon that the victory of the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XXXVI signified the unification of the nation after the tragic events of September 11, 2001 (Martin & Breitenfeldt, 2008; Miller, 2002; O'Brien, 2002; Shapiro, 2002). However, some scholars have suggested that more critical interpretations of the game point towards a propaganda display on behalf of the socio-political elite (Silk & Falcoux, 2005). Yet, what has been left out of this critical interpretation is an analysis of the Super Bowl as a racialized, discursive space. Scholars in the field of sport management have demonstrated a need for more critical race-based research (Armstrong, 2011; Singer, 2005). The theoretical concept of the white racial frame (Feagin, 2006; Feagin, 2013) answers this call as the frame seeks to explain the rationalization of systemic racism as exhibited in the United States (U.S.). Harmonious with the purpose of the white racial frame, this thesis employs a critical discourse analysis method as the overarching discourse of Super Bowl XXXVI is deconstructed using the concept of white racial framing. Adding a racial component to the interpretation of Super Bowl XXXVI offers a more comprehensive understanding of the discourse as well as how this discourse evoked certain variations in the way American national identity was sensed post-9/11. The discourse analyzed includes the game's broadcast, pre- and post-game ceremonies, the halftime performance, and amalgamated NFL Productions in reference to the 2001-02 NFL season and the Super Bowl. The findings discussed reveal a broadcast that was tacitly housed in the white racial frame so as to rationalize the events of 9/11 and provide appropriate reactions for

Americans that were in line with the agenda of the political elite. With this, broader topics will be discussed with regard to the white racial frame and the dominant narratives surrounding the events of 9/11 as well as implications across the field of sport management.

## **DEDICATION**

To those that perished in the events that took place on September 11, 2001: May you rest in peace. My sincerest condolences also go to the families of the deceased. Lastly, my thoughts also go out to everyone in the world that has been adversely affected by the events that transpired on 9/11.

To my mother: May your soul rest peacefully as you continue to guide me on this journey called life.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The voice of the people expresses the mind of the people, and that mind is made up for it by the group leaders in whom it believes and by those persons who understand the manipulation of public opinion. It is composed of inherited prejudices and symbols and clichés and verbal formulas supplied to them by the leaders. (Bernays, as quoted in Bernays & Miller, 2005, pg. 109)

The National Football League (NFL): America's most popular sport. According to Sports Media Watch, the NFL continues to grow in popularity with the Super Bowl averaging over 110 million viewers on TV in the United States (U.S.) since 2010 as well as posting records for all-time U.S. TV viewership in five of the last six years (Paulsen, 2015). The Super Bowl as a U.S. cultural event is televised in over 200 countries annually and represents much of American cultural hegemony (Cunningham & Welty Peachey, 2012; Brown, Kang, & Lee, 2012)

It is in this context, one of America's biggest stages, that the New England Patriots established themselves as an NFL powerhouse and subsequently America's "new" team. In 2002, the New England Patriots captured the nation by storm as a new dynasty was born. While the Patriots would go on to win 3 Super Bowls in 4 years (2002-2005) and continue to contend for years to come (including 2 more Super Bowl appearances and 1 more victory), much is often forgotten about their first victory in Super Bowl XXXVI.



A look back at Super Bowl XXXVI however shows a grieving nation coming together for a nationalistic celebration, establishing a new national identity post-9/11, and the proclamation that America was still standing after the tragic events of September 11, 2001 (also known as 9/11). As Martin and Breitenfeldt (2008) describe this Super Bowl, in the wake of the terrorist attacks the game served as a “symbol of unity in the nation” (p. 38). After the tragic events, the NFL responded by providing some sort of normalcy amidst the chaos by choosing to resume its regular season after a brief pause in the weeks following September 11, 2001. Scholars from across disciplines have contributed to this dominant discourse by detailing the “unbridled patriotism” of Super Bowl XXXVI (Shapiro, 2002, A1). The U.S. patriotic imagery, narratives, and ideologies saturated the game from the changing of the Super Bowl logo to an outline of the U.S. colored to resemble the U.S. flag, the display of the Declaration of Independence and a banner that read “United We Stand” outside of the Superdome, readings from the Bill of Rights by former players, four former presidents and Nancy Reagan reading excerpts from one of Abraham Lincoln’s speeches before the start of the game, the designation of the Super Bowl as a National Security Special Event (NSSE) by President George W. Bush, and more (Foster, 2002; MacCambridge, 2004; Martin & Breitenfeldt, 2008).

Another major aspect that contributed to Super Bowl XXXVI as a symbol of unity and the formation of a coherent national identity was “the literal and metaphorical uses of the word ‘patriot’” (Martin & Breitenfeldt, 2008, p. 38-39). Martin and Breitenfeldt (2008) go on to describe how the inclusion of the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl contributed to this sense of patriotic nationalism:

Interestingly, and conveniently, one of the teams that advanced to the Super Bowl was, indeed, the New England Patriots. For many, their battle through the season, and then in the Super Bowl, symbolized the nation's healing process from terrorism and the actual military battles that would take place in the Middle East. The Patriots were 14-point underdogs, and their eventual upset win solidified the symbolic triumph of patriotism, and by extension the United States, over evil and terrorism (p. 39).

Fans of the Patriots and the NFL (as well as fans of the "Patriot" narrative broadly) perceived the Patriots triumph as "preordained" (Berkrot, 2002), "destiny" or "fate" (Weiss, 2002), and the conclusion of the Super Bowl was a "Hollywood ending" (Shapiro, 2002, p. A1). When all was said and done with Super Bowl XXXVI, the 2001-2002 NFL season, with the inclusion of the season's climax in New Orleans on February 3, 2002, "illustrated some of the major beliefs of the fans through [the NFL's] actions and their use of the patriotism motif" (Martin & Breitenfeldt, 2008, p. 39) and enabled a return to normalcy through the sport of football.

While some may stand behind a positivist story of a nation healing through sport and the aptly named New England Patriots' triumph in Super Bowl XXXVI (Martin & Breitenfeldt, 2008; Malone, n.d.; Miller, 2002; O'Brien, 2002; Shapiro, 2002), sport management scholars have urged those in academia to study sport organizations and sporting events from a critical social science perspective (Frisby, 2005). According to Neuman (2003), critical social science is a "process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures of the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves" (p.81). Because of this nature of critical social

science, it is a very applicable lens to better understand how we theorize the practice of sport management (Frisby, 2005). While critical perspectives are more prevalent in sociological studies of sport, there is a need for sport management scholars to provide more critical perspectives that emanate from the organizational level. Deetz (1992) has postulated that corporations have emerged as the dominant U.S. institution, particularly with regard to the production of knowledge, identity, experience, and entertainment (p. 2). Therefore, sport(ing) organizations, managers, scholars, and educators have a responsibility to critically reflect on how societal structures impact sport in both positive and negative ways. This is not to say that critical approaches to studying sport are the *right* approaches to studying sport. Rather, as Frisby (2005) acknowledges, critical social science perspectives to studying the management of sport can be complimentary to other perspectives (e.g. positivism, interpretivism, post-modernism, etcetera). Sport management scholars are in a unique position to question these institutions and how they relate to various organizational functions that perpetuate “the bad and ugly sides of sport” (Frisby, 2005, p. 4). Therefore, this thesis will employ a critical social science lens to re-analyze and re-interpret Super Bowl XXXVI and the formation of U.S. national identity via narratives of white patriotism. This will largely run counter to the positivist discourse surrounding the patriotic display of the game. By illuminating a critical interpretation of the game, this research “offers a lens for contemplating how we can reduce the negative consequences of managerial action or inaction through transformative redefinition” (Frisby, 2005, p. 8).

Moreover, Chalip (2006) discusses five legitimations for sport management as a distinctive discipline. The fifth and final legitimation that he expounded upon is the notion of

national identity. He states that the general objective of sport national-identity-building is quite simple and that if “a shared sense of national identity can be forged, then a requisite foundation for nation building will have been established, and a shared sense of national purpose can be formed” (Chalip, 2006, p. 9). While national identity, pride, and purpose can certainly be formed via sport, there can also be negative consequences that can lead to an increase national/ethnic tensions. Therefore, Chalip (2006) beseeches sport management scholars to explore “how variations in context, symbols, and narratives evoke variations in the ways that sport is interpreted and in the ways that national identity is therefore sensed” (p.9). Doing so can shed insight into the different ways in which sport national-identity-building takes places as well as how to do so without conjuring up the negative characteristics that can be attached to nationalism. Incorporating a critical social science perspective (Frisby, 2005), this thesis will attempt to explain the “bad and ugly sides” (p. 4) of Super Bowl XXXVI and how the framing of the event’s discourse contributed to a shared national identity and purpose.

A brief literature review shows that there is little critical research regarding Super Bowl XXXVI as a propaganda event (Silk & Falcoux, 2005). Silk and Falcoux (2005) detailed two sporting events’ coverage that occurred during the same week in February: Super Bowl XXXVI and opening of the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. They found that the ceremonies involved and the general discourse present in each broadcast was laden with nationalist propaganda. As it relates to Super Bowl XXXVI, their analysis showed how the “media operated as a conduit for the powerful symbolic revision of the post- 9/11 American identity” (Silk & Falcoux, 2005, p. 455). Going through the pre-game ceremonies and the

broadcast of the game in their analysis, the authors bring to light the heavily embedded ideals of American exceptionalism and the selective re-telling of America's history.

While Silk and Falcoux (2005) provide a sound critical perspective on Super Bowl XXXVI and the patriotic display of American nationalism, their analysis lacks a focus on a critical, race-based interpretation of the event and the New England Patriots. Addressing this lack of a racial analysis in the literature, this thesis will add to Silk and Falcoux' work on the game's propagandist qualities (2005) by showing how the game's broadcast was also deeply-entrenched in the white racial frame (Feagin, 2013). This thesis will argue that the racial framing of the broadcast helped stimulate a pro-white foundation laid by the New England Patriots while also generating support for the political elite and the invasion of the Middle East. Given the dominant discourse surrounding the game, the purpose of this thesis is to provide an alternate interpretation of Super Bowl XXXVI utilizing the lens of the white racial frame. By doing so, this answers Frisby's (2005) call for sport management scholars to incorporate more critical social science perspectives. More so, this answers the call from scholars that study sport across disciplines for other scholars to take a critical, race-based approach to sport scholarship (Armstrong, 2011; King, 2007; McDonald, 2005; Singer, 2005). Additionally, this thesis will address Chalip's (2006) challenge to explore the various contexts, symbols, and narratives which influence how sport contributes to the sensing of national identity by incorporating a critical, race-based approach. As Cornel West (1993) has argued, race matters in U.S. society and it is important to understand the role that we play in these racialized contexts. Below, I will discuss literature surrounding Super Bowl XXXVI, sport and 9/11, and overall effects of 9/11 on the Super Bowl in general. It is important to

understand at this point that this thesis is not to downplay the events that transpired on 9/11. Rather, I send my regards to all those who suffered as a result of 9/11; the people that perished at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, the three hijacked planes, men and women of the armed forces (on either “side”), and the men, women, and children who were not a part of the armed forces that suffered as a result of the U.S. occupation of the Middle East. This thesis is focused on the discourse surrounding American national identity at the time as well as the rationalized response to 9/11 in which Super Bowl XXXVI played an integral part.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Silk and Falcoux (2005) provide the most comprehensive analysis of the propaganda display of Super Bowl XXXVI. They analyzed the broadcast of the game and brought to light the political subtext employed during the game. More specifically, they showed how the media broadcast of the game “performed the past in the present, acquainting the audience with their place in history, as well as with a depoliticized, authorized, and sanitized account that reordered the struggles, contestations, and historical trajectories of various peoples” (Silk & Falcoux, 2005, p. 462). While their analysis is extensive with regards to the realignment of public consciousness via the Super Bowl’s broadcast, Silk and Falcoux (2005) lack a racial component to their analysis.

Stempel (2006) looked into this topic from a broader perspective and discovered “the existence of a ‘televised masculinist sport-militaristic nationalism complex’ that contributed support for the U.S. invasion of Iraq” (p. 79). Stempel (2006) also noted that while support for a war and a preemptive attack were strongly correlated among a survey sample of 1,048 adults in 2003, “patriotic self-identity” was merely moderately correlated with the previous variables. Likely because patriotism is an interpretive concept, this also demonstrates the need on behalf of the political elite to define patriotism and market the concept to the American public. Touching on the existence of a racial link as well, Stempel (2006) discusses how White-coded masculinist sports were more strongly connected with support for the Iraqi War as opposed to non-White-coded masculinist sports. However, he states that these racial patterns “should be followed up on in more detail in future studies” (Stempel, 2006, p. 103). Therefore, this thesis will specifically address the calling for a detailed racial analysis by

examining the case of Super Bowl XXXVI in this post-9/11 context and how the white-framed narrative of patriotism contributed to this very same generation of support for the War on Terror.

Furthering these studies, Fischer (2014) did a critical discourse analysis of the 13 NFL games played on September 11, 2011 and discovered a similar militaristic and patriotically driven narrative. Along with the games themselves, various televised programs and ceremonies presented a “spectacle of the culture of militarism, as they present a unique instance of the sports-media-military nexus in contemporary society through the meticulous coordination, planning, and implementation of these ceremonies across multiple games, broadcast channels, and geographic locations” (Fischer, 2014). Fischer (2014) also touches on the formation of a neoethnic identity that helped to create an “aberrant” other in Middle Easterners and other ethnic minorities. An analysis of Super Bowl XXXVI through the lens of the theoretical concept of the white racial frame will both agree with this statement as well as extend the argument to include how racially framed ideologies contributed to support for the war nearly 10 years earlier.

Lastly, Schimmel (2011) looked into Super Bowls as a yearly event post-9/11 from an urban perspective and deconstructs the conflicting narrative of the Super Bowl as both a “target-rich environment” and an extremely safe environment. Schimmel goes on to detail the effects of the security changes to the Super Bowl in the wake of the attacks of 9/11, starting with Super Bowl XXXVI in 2002. While Schimmel’s analysis is of the Super Bowl event broadly and its intensified security, Schimmel details the effect that 9/11 had both on the NFL as an organization as well as host cities and potential host cities for the Super Bowl.



Schimmel's analysis demonstrates a strengthening of militaristic procedures in urban spaces as previously-abnormal levels of security became normalized while maintaining the framing of the Super Bowl as an event in which terrorists threaten the "American way of life" (Schimmel, 2011).

In conclusion, a racial analysis of Super Bowl XXXVI can add to this literature by beginning to better understand how and in what context the Super Bowl contributed to the generation of nationalistic support for the War on Terror. Below, I will discuss in more detail the critical race-based approach (i.e. the white racial frame) that is availed in this thesis. The racial framing of the discourse surrounding Super Bowl XXXVI is inherently naturalized as the dominant framing in the U.S. but will provide a sense of perspicacity to the discursive nationalism showcased in New Orleans' own Superdome on February 3, 2002. This perspective will add to the scholarship surrounding this topic as a focus on the racialized implications of the discourse is largely absent from the existing literature.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The white racial frame (Feagin, 2006; Feagin, 2013) will provide the framework for this discourse analysis. Application of the white racial frame (an integral component of systemic racism; see Feagin, 2006) answers the call for more critical-based research (Chalip, 1997; Frisby, 2005) as well as more critical race-based research (Armstrong, 2011; Singer, 2005) in sport management scholarship. Systemic racism, as coined by Joe Feagin (2006), suggests that racial oppression (by whites) is foundational to the formation of the United States and manifests within the various institutions that exist in society. A central component of systemic racism is what Feagin (2006) refers to as the white racial frame. The white racial frame is a dominant framing of society that especially contributes to the rationalization of a racist system. The white racial frame can be defined as “an organized set of racialized ideas, stereotypes, emotions, and inclinations to discriminate” (Feagin, 2006, p. 25). Specifically, the different dimensions of the white racial frame include racialized stereotypes and ideologies (a beliefs aspect), racial interpretations and narratives (cognitive aspect), racialized images and language accents (visual and auditory aspects), racialized emotions, and an inclination to take discriminatory action. It is important to emphasize the latter dimension of the white racial frame and that the frame “not only explains and interprets the everyday world but also implies or offers actions in line with the frame’s explanatory perspective” (Feagin, 2006, p. 26).

This worldview propagated by whites (particularly by white Americans) can be broken down into two subframes, an anti-other frame and a pro-white frame, and includes both conscious and unconscious understandings. While the anti-other subframe is an integral

aspect to white racism and is essential to the colonial exploitation of non-whites, the bulk of this analysis is focused on the notion of the pro-white subframe. From the inception of Anglo colonies in North America to contemporary times, the development of a white racial framing of society has included a “central subframe that assertively accents a positive view of white superiority, virtue, moral goodness, and action” (Feagin, 2013, p. 10).

As a critical, race-based examination this study is rooted in the white racial frame. This concept will provide the framework for analyzing the overarching discourse of Super Bowl XXXVI as this analysis will show how a white-framed narrative of patriotism is rationalized in the context of a post-9/11 US. Below, I will discuss the research method employed and how this fits with the concept of the white racial frame.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

In line with the conceptual framework of the white racial frame, this thesis will utilize a critical discourse analysis. Given the significance of the Super Bowl as a discursive space (O'Donnell & Spires, 2012), a critical discourse analysis will seek to deconstruct the discourse presented via Super Bowl XXXVI. Van Dijk (2003) defines a critical discourse analysis as:

A type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (p. 352)

A critical discourse analysis is harmonious with the purpose of critical research and seeks to offer a different perspective from which to analyze various institutional areas regarding discourse, communication, and power and inequity (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2003). In doing so, critical discourse analyses often bridge the micro and macro perspectives by bringing to light issues of a controlled discourse (Van Dijk, 2003). In this sense, the white racial frame as a theoretical framework fits well with the critical discourse analysis method. The white racial frame seeks to explain the dominant worldview, narratives, perspectives, etcetera that ultimately rationalize and drive systemic racism in the US (Feagin, 2006). Because the white racial frame is a naturalized worldview (Feagin, 2013), a critical discourse analysis paves the way for illuminating this framing within the overarching discourse surrounding white patriotism.

The scope of the material analyzed includes pre-game events and rituals, the game, halftime performances, post-game conclusions, and lastly both the NFL and New England Patriots recounts of the game. Specifically the data analyzed includes a replay of the original Fox broadcast shown by NFL Classics during Super Bowl XLII, the Sky Sports broadcast of the game, the commemorative Super Bowl Champions DVD produced by NFL Productions, and the History of the New England Patriots DVD also from NFL Productions. This data sample is sufficient for this type of study because these productions effectively summarize the overarching discourse of Super Bowl XXXVI and how it was/is to be remembered. As O'Donnell and Spires (2012) note,

The televised version of the Super Bowl as discursive formation is remarkably complex, consisting not only of the game commentary and the ads, but also the many elements which make this media event – lasting on average some seven hours – unique: the pre-game show, the national anthem, the half-time show, the sideline interviews, the on-screen graphics. It is a place where a sporting event, an advertising event and a music industry event meet and overlap and also maintain now long-established relationships with the entertainment industry more generally and with the military, and also on occasions the world of politics. (p. 4-5)

Over the course of these productions/broadcasts, there is an intertwining of 9/11 remembrances, history, and socio-political ideologies that remain tacitly housed in a framing of US society by elite white males. In this regard, a critical discourse analysis is the preferred method of choice for this thesis as I interrogate the naturalized ideologies of Super Bowl

XXXVI (e.g. the white racial framing of American patriotism) with the aim to explicate said naturalizations (Fairclough, 2013).

## 5. FINDINGS

Below I will discuss the findings of this thesis. I start by introducing the New England Patriots and their Patriot narrative as this organization offered a preliminary topic of discourse for Super Bowl XXXVI. As noted by others, the Patriots presented a unique opportunity in the overall dominant understanding of the game as a uniquely American patriotic event (Martin & Breitenfeldt, 2008; Miller, 2002; O'Brien, 2002; Shapiro, 2002).

### 5.1 The New England Patriots

A pre-cursory component to the discourse of Super Bowl XXXVI was the New England Patriots organizational narrative. While positivist interpretations of the game might perceive the success of the Patriots as opportunistic in the overall healing process and unification of the U.S. post-9/11 (Martin & Breitenfeldt, 2008; Shapiro, 2002), critically analyzing the inherently racialized narrative of what it means to be a "Patriot" shines a different light on the Patriots organization. While there are many different interpretations of what it means to be a patriot, the New England Patriots have chosen to go with a mythologically-specific portrayal of a patriot. For this professional football organization, a Patriot is clearly defined as a revolutionary white male soldier from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This specific definition of a Patriot is most clearly observed in the team's live mascot, Pat Patriot. Pat is a stereotypically handsome white male from the 1770s. With protruding facial features such as a prominent jaw line, a chin with a dimple, and a wide smile combined with a contradictorily low brow line, Pat Patriot has become an idolized symbol of hegemonic white masculinity.

There is also an older logo of Pat Patriot that can still be seen on much of the Patriots merchandise. This logo shows this same white American Revolution soldier in a Continental Army uniform with similar facial features (similar to the newer, live mascot) in a football stance as he is set to snap a football. The carefully articulated uniform adorned by Pat in this image leaves little room for variations in the interpretation of “what kind” of patriot the Patriots represent.

In contemporary times, this figment of American culture has become mythological in nature, generally celebrating the “original” patriots as brilliant, benevolent men with the title of our nation’s “Founding Fathers”. Despite the fact that many of the Founding Fathers (i.e. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, etc.) exhibited a white patriarchal frame that has dominated Euro-colonial history in North America, these men and their white “virtuousness” (Feagin, 2013, p. 67) are celebrated to this day.

## **5.2 Super Bowl XXXVI**

Next I will discuss the discourse surrounding Super Bowl XXXVI through the key elements of the white racial frame: racial stereotypes and ideologies, interpretive racial narratives, images and accents, emotions, and the inclination to take action.

### **5.2.1 Racial Stereotypes and Ideologies (Beliefs Aspect)**

Perhaps the most overt racial stereotype present in Super Bowl XXXVI was the stereotype of the virtuous white male patriot as exhibited through the New England Patriots organization and pre-game ceremonies. While this historically relevant character of the white male patriot is often attached to the formation of an egalitarian democratic nation, whites during this time (e.g. the late 1700s-early 1800s) generally agreed upon the superiority of



whites over other races mentally, spiritually, and culturally (Feagin, 2006; Feagin 2013). An example of this perspective on white superiority was discussed by the famous intellectual Benjamin Franklin in the 1750s when he stated that the mixing of whites with non-whites would lead to “a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent” (quoted in Feagin, 2013, p. 67). This pro-white framing, while losing some of its more explicit anti-other aspects, continued to implicitly drive the narrative of patriotism in Super Bowl XXXVI where the event celebrated both the U.S. as a nation as well as (white) American character and ideology.

With this notion of American ideology, the most widely held ideologies of American society are those of liberty-and-justice, freedom, and democracy. However, historically whites have framed these very concepts in color-coded terms (i.e. whiteness being tied to liberty while non-whiteness has not been tied to liberty) (Feagin, 2013). Since the American Revolution, or the time of the “Patriots” in question, the majority of whites have celebrated a liberty-and-justice frame though this framing has largely become “rhetorical and hypothetical” (Feagin, 2013, p. 164). These rhetorical devices were emphasized by NFL Productions in the commemorative DVD and the Salute to America segment. The NFL intentionally interjected words from then President George W. Bush. Throughout the remembrance of the season in the NFL’s Salute to America, Bush’s speech took on the role of a quasi-narrator as his words played off of these same rhetorical concepts of freedom and justice, building a political subtext to that particular NFL season that would climax in the championship game. This intermingling of political ideologies and the game of football bonded the 2001-2002 NFL season and U.S. political ideologies post-9/11 together forever.

With these concepts being employed throughout the discourse of this segment, Feagin (2013) states that the “most intensive U.S. nationalism has become a type of white superiority orientation” (p. 94). This is because the dominant framing of these American ideologies remain white-framed in contemporary times with “historically white interpretations” of freedom, democracy, equality, justice, and etcetera. Similarly, Ladson-Billings (2003) has discussed how public discourse became colored after the events of 9/11. She states that the white-framed discourse post-9/11 gave birth to three epistemological themes: defining humanity, defining importance, and determining the future. These themes addressed who and what constituted human-ness (e.g. being a religious fanatic as a white versus being primitive or unevolved for non-whites), who, what, and when certain issues were deemed as important (e.g. the “post-9/11” verbage that I employ throughout this thesis), and lastly the future with regard to the emphasized past. Ladson-Billings states that

Soon after September 11<sup>th</sup>, who and what constituted an American became a fixed and rigid image. And that concept has little room for dissent or challenge. I fear there will be a retreat to nativist and parochial thinking about who we are and who or what the “Other” is.

Such is the case with Super Bowl XXXVI as a discursive reaction to the events of 9/11. Being American became synonymous with the white-defined concept of the American patriot so as to say that the more an individual clung to this defined concept of an American patriot, the more American that person became.

An example of present-day U.S. imperialism, this ideological argument fits well within the white racial frame as it holds an evangelist framing of Euro-American socio-

political ideologies as well as an anti-Middle East, inferior-framing of a dictatorship. Feagin (2013) asserts that contemporary white racial framing holds true to a superior perspective of Western civilization which has been used to rationalize “dozens of U.S. military invasions” (p. 157), including that of the recent occupation of the Middle East.

In conclusion with regard to these ideological narratives which are constantly being re-defined to fit the dominant framing of society, I quote historian Howard Zinn (2003):

The democratic principle, enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, declared that government was secondary, that the people who established it were primary. Thus, the future of democracy depended on the people, and their growing consciousness of what was the decent way to relate to their fellow human beings all over the world (p. 682).

As we live in an ever-globalizing society, it is imperative that relational consciousness continues to expand among the masses. In particular, the U.S. is rapidly changing. The racial/ethnic demographics of the U.S. are projected to continue shifting and, according to Cunningham (2015), these changes are especially relevant to the sport industry as whites will no longer be a majority population in the U.S. by the year 2050. Thus, as Zinn (2003) states, our future (and the future of democratic organizations) depends on how we conceptualize decent ways of relating to our fellow human beings as opposed to a rigid either-or framing exhibited in the white racial frame.

### **5.2.2 Interpretive Racial Narrative (Cognitive Aspect)**

Silk and Falcoux (2005) discuss a “selective retelling” of American history that took place in Super Bowl XXXVI. In this type of context, they state that “selections of the national collective memory are performed that dissembled communities, detach culture from its historical roots, and decentralize certain (especially minority) communities” (Silk & Falcoux, 2005, p. 455). These selective narratives are based on historically propagated white myths. More so, the involvement of the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XXXVI created a foundational racialized narrative undergirding the game’s discourse. However, the racialized narrative of white virtuosity and superiority of the Patriots was not the end of narrative. Other portrayals, such as the Super Bowl XXXVI Champions commemorative DVD, discuss a racialized, militaristic perspective of the game. In this film, as the game was set to take place the narrator describes the two teams by comparison. “On one sideline,” says the narrator, “offensive wizard Mike Martz and the NFL’s highest scoring, star-filled, ‘Greatest Show on Turf’. On the other, defensive guru Bill Belichick and his army of confident, blue-collar men.”

This notion of blue-collar-ness in reference to the Patriots, born out of the “Protestant work-ethic”, is vital to the white racial frame (Feagin, 2013). An emphasis of blue-collar-ness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century overlooks hundreds of years of unjust enrichment through the impoverishment of various communities of color. In his closing remarks of the film, the narrator states that “[The Patriots] were a team in the truest sense of the word and like their country, they were united. Brothers in arms. Proud to be Patriots. Champions at last.” Again, there is a fusing together of the Patriots, their unity and blue-collar-ness, and the U.S. as a

country. This further stresses the duality of the word patriot as noted by Martin and Breitenfeldt (2008).

These various, yet interrelated, types of interpretations of American history and the American present are central to the white racial frame. Within the frame, the collective memory of U.S. history is only rivaled by a “collective forgetting” with regard to the developmental history of the United States (Feagin, 2013, p. 17). Not only was a tailored remembrance of American history presented during Super Bowl XXXVI, but many aspects of history were skillfully left out of the dominant discourse. Different aspects of the white racial frame are drawn upon in times of need (Feagin, 2013), and in the context of a post-9/11 US a virtuous white American narrative was presented at the Super Bowl that re-emphasized “emotion-laden values and fiction-laden interpretations” (p. 13) of the mythological narrative of American history. In sum, the racialized, war-oriented discourse surrounding the Patriots victory demonstrates the propagandistic value of Super Bowl XXXVI in rationalizing the events of 9/11 as well as the proper response for America(ns). This was accomplished in the context of a historically white-framed society, an evangelist-framed sport organization in the New England Patriots, and the display of U.S. nationalism observed through the re-interpretation of American history.

### **5.2.3 Images and Accents (Visual and Auditory Elements)**

In the wake of the events that occurred on 9/11/2001, the NFL responded. Months before Super Bowl XXXVI would take place on February 3, 2002, the NFL changed the official Super Bowl logo. Originally the logo had taken on a theme representing the host city: New Orleans, Louisiana (see figure 1). However, in response to 9/11 the NFL changed the

logo to one which encompassed a much more national representation. The logo was changed to an outline of the 48 continental states bearing the colors red, white, and blue and resembling the US flag (see figure 2). The aim of the new logo was clearly pointing in a “patriotic” direction.



*Figure 1 – Original Super Bowl XXXVI Logo – Reprinted from sportslogos.net (2015)*



*Figure 2 – Super Bowl XXXVI Logo – Reprinted from wikipedia.org (2015)*

The inclusion of the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XXXVI added a unique twist to this already patriotic direction of the Super Bowl via the logo. The dynamic between the geographic region of “New England” and the visual representation of the continental 48 states in the logo is striking. The former represents the Northeastern colonies established by Anglo-Protestant migrants in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries while the latter became a symbol of pride for the Anglo colonial expansion of the United States (i.e. Manifest Destiny). With regards to the early 2000s, Feagin (2012) discussed a new form of U.S. manifest destiny; one that includes an “exceptionalist and white-expansionist” (p. 142) perspective to the corporate political expansion across the globe, often times by use of military intervention. This is exemplified by the U.S. occupation in the Middle East and the dominant framing thereof by the elite.

On the subject of how accents impacted the framing of the Super Bowl's discourse, a particularly notable English accent was utilized to emphasize togetherness of the non-U.S. nations with the U.S., yet from a Eurocentric standpoint, represented something more along the lines of sameness (i.e. political and economic ideologies). As discussed by Silk and Falcous (2005), Paul McCartney was invited to the studio booth during halftime in which the discussion has a focus around 9/11, the U.S. and Britain, and reactions to the events. When McCartney was asked if he felt a "certain American pride right now", McCartney responded with "You've got to you know, it's great to be here. I'm kind of helping to represent the rest of the world stand up with America at this time, we're very proud to be here" (quoted in Silk & Falcous, 2005, p. 459). At this time, Fox promptly cut to Irish band U2's halftime performance so as to continue this notion of the world standing with America. Only in this instance, "the rest of the world" is represented by two Anglo-European groups from Ireland and England, suggesting that the rest of the West constitutes the rest of the world.

As Super Bowl XXXVI was concerned, the various visual (that permeated so many other aspects of the game) and auditory elements to the game highlight the white racial frame of the event. The American/Euro-centric nature of this framing is attached to the exceptionalist attitudes surrounding Western societies. The examples of the logo change and the Anglo musical performers are but two instances that show this. As the elements of the white racial frame coalesce to form a single dominant framing, so too will the following sections exemplify this as these images and sounds were used throughout the game's discourse in various manners. This element was used throughout the broadcast to evoke the emotions of pride, grief, anger, cohesion, and inclinations to take action based on these



attitudes and emotions. The following section will address some of the aspects of Super Bowl XXXVI that were geared towards the generation of said emotions.

#### **5.2.4 Emotions Aspect**

For Super Bowl XXXVI, emotions were an unavoidable aspect to the game. As the NFL provided an outlet for Americans to express their concern and support for the victims of 9/11 while bringing a sense of normalcy to the nation amidst the chaos (Martin & Breitenfeldt, 2008), Super Bowl XXXVI would represent a culmination of the nation's varying responses to the events of early September of 2001. Music was one element of the Super Bowl that was rife with emotions. Pre-game musical performances included Mary J. Blige and Marc Anthony singing an emotionally laden version of 'America the Beautiful'. The singing of this song struck a chord with the audience as members of the U.S. military provided background vocals while hoisting the U.S. flag. Following the performance by Blige and Anthony was a "stirring tribute to America", as stated by the commentator in the Sky Sports broadcast, by Paul McCartney. McCartney began his performance running onstage (followed by female cheerleaders dressed in patriotic attire) and professing "America, we love you!" The crowd roared to this proclamation before McCartney continued by exclaiming "Okay, everybody clap your hands for freedom!" As McCartney made an effort to get the crowd clapping along with his song, he began singing his 9/11 tribute track titled 'Freedom'. In this song, McCartney confidently sings the word "freedom" 19 times. With regards to this historically white-framed notion of freedom (Feagin, 2013), McCartney sang about a "fight for the right to live in freedom". One particular verse in the song addresses the instance in which anyone tries to take away his freedom, "They'll have to

answer/'Cause this is my right". Quite overtly, this song expressed the Americanized emotions surrounding the white-defined concept of "freedom" and the willingness to take action to defend said freedom. During one period where McCartney was singing "freedom", the word "FREEDOM!" continuously flashed on the Super Dome's banner as the camera flashed over this banner as well. Furthermore, during the singing of this song, a large mural was raised behind McCartney displaying the Statue of Liberty that was filled with signatures, drawings, and notes from people in tribute to the victims of 9/11 as well as people drawn at the foot of the Statue of Liberty that seemed to be lined up in support of freedom. In front of the stage, flags from various nations and a map of the world were spun around as the camera zoomed in closer to represent global support. As the song comes to a close, McCartney changes from the self-expression of "I" used throughout the song to include everyone with his final stanza, "We will fight/For the right/To live in freedom". Within McCartney's lyrics lies a typical framing by the white male. A framing referred to by Feagin (2013) as a "strong desire for dominance, often associated with an intense white masculinity" (p. 107) which has stayed relatively common throughout history. Though once a member of one of the most popular anti-war musical groups (e.g. The Beatles), McCartney's song fell in line with the framing by the socio-political elite in which the term freedom came hand-in-hand with a duty to fight for said freedom in the case in which it was threatened (a play on the narrative that the U.S. was attacked on 9/11 because of its freedom and democracy).

Next to be played before the start of the game was a sporting tradition in the U.S.: the singing of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' performed by Mariah Carey. As Carey sang the national anthem, the U.S. flag in the shape of the continental states (the same shape as the

Super Bowl XXXVI logo) was stretched out behind her. Simultaneously, a small group of firefighters and policemen raised a flag at an angle that was purposefully compared to the famous statue of soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima, signifying a victory in World War II. This type of pride in U.S. militaristic mythology seemed to drive the pre-game ceremonies.

If the emotions surrounding the events of 9/11 were vaulted to the forefront of the broadcast during the pre-game musical performances, then these same emotions undoubtedly peaked during U2's halftime performance. U2's emotionally charged halftime performance served as a poignant tribute to the victims of 9/11 in a setting that represented a culmination of the varying responses to the tragic events that took place just 5 months earlier. U2, like McCartney, is not generally associated with pro-war performances. While the band may have been unaware of the political intentions behind their performance, they intentionally performed an emotional halftime tribute at Super Bowl XXXVI. Melvin (2002) aptly deconstructed the musical performance during halftime:

The beginning of the halftime show was inconspicuous in relation to 9-11, and seemed like any other concert U2 would play in a stadium. The lights were enormous, as was the stage, which gave the performance less intimate feel. Bono, the lead singer of U2, entered the stage by walking through the crowd while singing, "Beautiful Day." Once on stage, the camera often focused on Bono's face or body, with some shots of the crowd and the other members of U2.

Following the energetic first song, the tone on stage became more solemn as Bono began to whisper into the microphone as crowd members within and

around the large red heart stage began to waive red glow sticks, which made the heart double in size. The heart was clearly a sign of love...

In his analysis, Melvin (2002) breaks down the emotionally generative discourse of the halftime performance. Whereas the performance may have begun with a “less intimate feel,” the first song generated an energetic feeling while calming to a more “solemn” feel in the second song that created a sense of “love” within the atmosphere. Melvin then continues his analysis:

As U2's guitar's player, The Edge, began to strum the first chords of, "Where the Streets Have No Name," a tall white screen dropped from the dome ceiling providing a backdrop to the stage. Then, as Bono began to sing, "September 11th, 2001", was projected in large glowing white letters on the screen. The date then began to rise, followed by the names of the victims on board airplanes in the 9-11 tragedy, with the flight number preceding each list of names.

Through the imagery of the screen with the victims' names, the U2 performance added a new element to being American, which was not present in either of the first two texts. The new aspect of Americanism was remembering the victims. The theme of remembrance that U2 portrayed, apart from love, did appear to be the focus of the performance.

As the solemn mood evolved into the literal tribute to the victims of 9/11, Melvin (2002) notes the “new aspect of Americanism was remembering the victims” (p. 16). Here, we see the interconnected nature of the white racial frame insofar as emotions being

intertwined with a selective memory of what it means to be American. Concluding his analysis, Melvin states that

As the performance was drawing to a close, Bono began to repeat the words, "love, love, love," as he made the shape of a heart on his chest, reiterating the themes present in all texts that being American is loving one another and coming together to make our country a better place to live. Just before the half time show broke to a commercial break, Bono opened his coat to reveal an American flag as the lining of his jacket. The American flag again represented the colors red, white and blue as a way to display American pride, similar to the commodification of the colors in "World's Greatest." Simultaneously, a red, white and blue E-Trade logo appeared in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. E-Trade, an internet stock market broker and sponsor of the halftime show, represents America's economy and our capitalist system.

U2's performance intertwined love, pride, and American identity into one dramatic proclamation summed up in one instance: Bono emphatically showing the U.S. flag lining of the inside of his jacket. All the while, white American capitalist ideology manifests on screen in the form of the E-Trade sponsorship, again intertwining ideology, narrative, and emotions. This halftime performance by U2 would go on to be considered one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest, halftime performances of all time (Sports Illustrated, 2015). Clearly, as Melvin (2002) puts it, popular music during this time became "used as a tool to deliver the 'patriotic' propaganda of a dominant (i.e., male, white, anglo, Christian, and middle/upper class) sociopolitical ideology" (p. 2). This patriotic propaganda was intentionally saturated with

emotively jarring performances during Super Bowl XXXVI so as to maximize its effect. This was accomplished through the dominant framing of (white) American mythological pride that accompanied the “patriotic propaganda” displayed through the various emotionally charged ceremonies affiliated with Super Bowl XXXVI.

### **5.2.5 Inclination to Take Action (To Discriminate)**

There were also various instances throughout the data analyzed that stimulated an inclination to discriminate among viewers of amalgamated Super Bowl XXXVI productions. This includes, but is not limited to, the periodic reminding of Americans of the significance of the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, the interjection of the U.S. military forces into the game’s broadcast, and the overly broad “other-ing” rooted in one of President George W. Bush’s speeches present in the commemorative DVD.

In order to address the allusions to Afghanistan, I must rely on secondary data that was previously gathered by other sources. Primarily, I will draw from Silk and Falcoux (2005) and their analysis of the Super Bowl’s discourse as they analyzed the original Fox broadcast in its entirety. The Sky Sports broadcast did not pay tribute to the troops in the same way that the original Fox Sports broadcast did and the NFL Classics recount of the game omitted these critically important aspects to the game’s contextual relevance. Another piece of secondary data that will address this element of the inclination to take discriminatory action is Stempel’s (2006) analysis that showed the doctrine of preemptive attacks manifested through sport discourse. I will also draw in part from O’Donnell and Spires (2008) for similar reasons of access to the full, original Fox broadcast.

In the years following 9/11, the Super Bowl employed a discourse referred to by O'Donnell and Spires (2008) as "America at war". This is exemplified by the involvement of the various branches of the U.S. military into the Super Bowl's presentation. Most overtly, Super Bowl XXXVI would periodically allude to the U.S. troops in Afghanistan, tying together the white masculinist desire for domination, the inclination to take discriminatory action, and the Super Bowl. These allusions took place multiple times as the Fox broadcast would show American troops in the Middle East gathered together to watch the Super Bowl as commentators and players expressed their support for said troops fighting for U.S. freedom (O'Donnell & Spires, 2012), particularly with reference to the troops on active duty in Kandahar (Silk & Falcou, 2005). Silk and Falcou (2005) indicate that the "cultural producers at Fox Sports" (p. 455) contributed to the overarching discourse by reminding Americans of the "threatening and abject other", specifically in Afghanistan.

Additionally, the rest of the broadcast of the Super Bowl was rife with militaristic implications. The military is typically affiliated with certain pre-game ceremonies in professional sports in the U.S., like the hoisting of the flag and the singing of the national anthem, but Super Bowl XXXVI was particularly inundated with members of the U.S. military. Various segments, such as individual player introductions generally done in the first quarter of a football game, were initiated via graphics and scenes that feature real U.S. military members in what appeared to be some type of control station. These acts stressed the propagandistic significance of these military member's involvement. The broadcast, as with much U.S. military and political propaganda at the time, was designed to garner support for the troops.

Super Bowl XXXVI's Commemorative DVD has a segment titled "NFL Salute to America" that accentuated the NFL's response to the chaos and confusion that followed the tragic events of 9/11. This segment is laden with words from President George W. Bush. Throughout these presented speeches, Bush utilizes the broad, interpretive concepts that dominate popular discourse in the U.S. For example, the second stanza spoken by Bush in this segment went as follows:

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

These first words call upon an inclination to take action from the beginning of the speech. By broadly alluding to "enemies of freedom," this positioned the U.S. as an altruistic protagonist. Further, these words sought to unify Americans behind this cause as Bush used terms such as "our country" and "our grief". These broad uses of unifying, white-defined terms such as freedom and justice combined with the discourse of irrational enemies in the Middle East throughout other Super Bowl XXXVI rhetoric recalibrated public consciousness to understand both the U.S. as the hero of the story and Arab nations as the villain. This type of duality is a key component to the white racial frame (Feagin, 2013).

The US intervention of the Middle East has often been rationalized through an exceptionalist framing as well as "implicit or explicit racial framing accenting U.S. superiority over people whose racial or ethnic characteristics, cultural institutions, or socio-political systems are supposedly inferior to their European and North American counterpart"



(Feagin, 2012). This racialized superiority and exceptionalism permeated the overarching discourse of Super Bowl XXXVI making racialized sense of the U.S. invasion of the Middle East. Bush's final line spoken in the NFL's Salute to America speaks to the imperial/expansionist nature of his depiction of the enemy when he states "We will not tire. We will not falter. And we will not fail." Throughout this evangelistic narrative, no real enemy was ever clearly specified. Instead the overarching discourse posited that our enemy was embodied in a non-white, non-Protestant Arab nation whose societal structure and form of government were inferior to that of the U.S.; a people and a nation which we as Americans had the responsibility to "bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies".

Stempel's (2006) analysis in the summer of 2003 showed that the "level of involvement in televised masculinist sport was correlated with support for the Iraqi war and for the unilateralist doctrine of preventive attacks and with strong patriotic feelings for the United States" (p. 82). There is a close tie between the discourse surrounding both football and war and the use of militaristic terms (Stempel, 2006). Football is itself a hyper-masculine environment that embraces militaristic framing. This framing, in a post-9/11 context, implied that right course of action was a corrective course of action. That is to say that the superiority of American epistemologies had a duty to "correct" societies in the Middle East. This led to an overly broad other-ing of Arabic peoples regardless of American citizenship status. As Ladson-Billings (2003) voiced, Americans of Arab or Middle Eastern descent fell victim to this discriminatory rhetoric as (white) Americans proposed various surveillance programs and other restrictions aimed at retrenching civil liberties (p. 8-9).

In its totality, the discourse of Super Bowl XXXVI presented information such that the inclination to take discriminatory action aspect of the white racial frame was stimulated along with the more dominant, pro-white framing of American national identity. This was accomplished through references to military posts in Afghanistan, white masculine militarism, overwhelming support for this military response, and the emphasis of “enemies of freedom”, among other broad terminology, in affiliated productions like the commemorative DVD. The white racial framing of these events offered a lens from which discriminatory action was to be taken in response to the events of 9/11; that we (the U.S.) had the duty to bring American democracy, however defined, to the people of the Middle East through military means. Clearly more discriminatory framing was taking place outside the realm of the football, but the normalization of the militaristic/imperialistic response helped to stimulate this critical aspect of the white racial frame.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The discourse analyzed in this study exhibited a white racial framing of Super Bowl XXXVI. An exceptionalistic U.S. national identity was formulated via white-framed patriotism throughout the game's broadcast and associated events. This framing of the events allowed for the selective telling of American history as well as the recalibration of the American public, or "American realignment" (Silk & Falcoux, 2005, p. 461). With regard to this realignment of the public, research has shown that the level of societal threat can cause a shift in the socio-political framing of the relatively non-authoritarian or moderately authoritarian towards "the direction of a more authoritarian framing, at least for a time" (Feagin, 2012, p. 123). This authoritarian shift is noted by scholars across disciplines (Chomsky, 2002; Feagin, 2012). Feagin (2012) goes on to mention that political leaders can play on fears of external threats to society and shift the general population's orientation, even those not as enticed by authoritarian actions, to the acceptance of more elitist and covert government actions, often breeding hostility toward "certain racial or ethnic outgroups" (Feagin, 2012, p. 91). The conservative leaders are known to have done this following the events of late 2001. This authoritarian shift is exemplified by militarization of US leadership and the placated consent of the public on the significant restrictions of civil liberties through the USA Patriot Act following the events of 9/11 (Abdo, 2005; Chang, 2001; Feagin, 2012; Khalil, 2005; Sinnar, 2003; Whitehead & Aden, 2001; Wong, 2006b; Zinn, 2014).

The mass media plays an integral role in the propagandization and calibration of the American public (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Super Bowl XXXVI was one such mediated event that fostered an authoritarian shift in the socio-political framing of the public. Along

with a general rightward shift in political ideologies in the late 20th century and a polarization in party leadership, US leadership has largely been able to shape public opinion on certain political issues (Levendusky, 2009). In order to communicate this leaderships' ideologies to the public, elite-run mainstream media events and coverage were able to act as an agent on behalf of the leadership to help political party affiliates come to shared understandings of the socio-political world (Feagin, 2012; Levendusky, 2009). This is exhibited by the broadcast of Super Bowl XXXVI. Political ideologies of the white elite permeated the event, as an authoritarian response to 9/11 became normalized under the propaganda display of the game and its surrounding events. Through a rigid white racial framing of society, the elite were able to effectively garner consent from the emotion surrounding the events of September 11th, 2001, the narrative of the white patriot from the late 18th century, images of fallen victims designed to elicit an emotional response, and an overarching inclination to discriminate against non-white, non-protestant peoples.

Given this worldview of the white racial frame that is propagated throughout the US and the narrative of the virtuous white male patriot, Super Bowl XXXVI presented the ideal stage to generate consent and support from the American public. This propaganda display explicitly positioned the United States as the benevolent protagonist, civilized and democratic. Meanwhile, U.S. leaders were able to manufacture a demonized, irrational antagonist in a broad enough manner so the U.S. military could effectively go to war with any countries whom the U.S thought were "harboring terrorists" (Zinn, 2014). This overall shift in the racialized, militaristic framing can also be seen in sport with regard to the ever-evolving security measures undertaken at Super Bowl. Since 2002 every Super Bowl has

been named a NSSE event with numerous changes with regards to security and protocol all while providing a means for host-cities to further militarize their local police force (Schimmel, 2011).

Whereas Guilianotti (2005) states that sport can be understood as an “ideological tool, misleading the masses to sustain bourgeois control” (p.32), I argue that sport can also be understood as an ideological tool *leading* the masses. In this case, the Super Bowl induced the public support of a white-defined national identity. This identity precipitated from the racially framed discourse of the Super Bowl that retold American history through a white American evangelist lens. Silk and Falcoux (2005) discussed this “selective re-telling” of American history during the ceremonies surrounding Super Bowl XXXVI. However, given the U.S.’s unique racial history, this argument of selective re-telling, though correct, is incomplete. In *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing*, Feagin (2013) elaborates on this racialized concept of the “collective memory” (p. 16) of Americans along with highlighting the importance of “collective forgetting” (p. 17) given the historical context of the U.S. with regard to dominant mythological narratives of the development of the U.S.

As a discursive space whereby the narratives and ideologies of white-framed patriotism were conveyed to the public, the broadcast of the Super Bowl has implications for many stakeholders. Among perhaps the most important of these stakeholders are the organizers of the Super Bowl. O’Donnell and Spires (2013) note that the “institutional structures of the Super Bowl as a media event give the organisers a significant advantage in the discursive and ideological stakes” (p. 19). Along with the organizers, the elite

(community and national) have a vested capital interest in the influencing of political decisions and attitudes (Sparvero, 2012, p. 115). While these spaces are prime for manufacturing the consent of the public on behalf of the political elite, we as sport practitioners, scholars, etc. must reexamine the role of sport within these contexts.

From an academic standpoint, this means to continue incorporating critical modes of research within the field of sport management. New ways of conceptualizing sport can in turn affect “the ways in which we construct the practice of sport management” (Chalip, 1997, p.3). This is particularly beneficial to a field such as sport management because as the field develops, sport requires different ways of theorizing sport and new insights to influence the practice thereof (Amis & Silk, 2005). As such, a need for more critical, race-based research has been established in the field of sport management (Armstrong, 2011; Singer, 2005) and while this thesis attempts to address that need, more work is needed to deconstruct the racialization of sport(ing) bodies.

## 7. CONCLUSION

One must start from premises rooted in truth and reality rather than myth (Ture & Hamilton, 1992, p. xvi).

American mythological narratives have led to a misconception about what it means to be American in contemporary times. As the sport industry continues to diversify in the coming decades (Cunningham, 2015), we as sport management scholars, educators, and practitioners must ask ourselves if we are moving further from truth. As whites will no longer be a majority population in the near future, what institutional structures are in place that could further exacerbate racial and ethnic tensions? Will whiteness continue to be as prized in U.S. society as it is in 2015? What are the repercussions of continuing pro-white-framed narratives through the institution of sport? While it will be many years before we find out definite answers to these questions, the time to positively impact the outcome of a diversifying population is now. There is little to support any claims that rooting our premises in truth and reality will create an idealistic, utopian society, however rooting premises in myth incontrovertibly leads to misconstructions in the construction of the everyday world. Thus, it is important for sport managers to critically reflect on their self-agency in the creation of the everyday world. How are current sport management practices contributing to systemic racism, international tensions, or to cross-cultural pressures?

In conclusion, this critical discourse analysis of the white racial framing of patriotism in Super Bowl XXXVI provides a new perspective for interpreting how the Super Bowl contributed to the formation of American national identity. The specific elements of the white racial frame (e.g. stereotypes and ideologies, interpretive narratives, images and

accents, emotions, and the inclination to take discriminatory action) (Feagin, 2006; Feagin, 2013) provide a new paradigm for deconstructing how this white-patriotic identity was and can be communicated to the public via sport. This addresses Chalip's (2006) challenge for sport management scholars to understand how variations in contextual narratives contribute to variations in the ways that national identity is formulated. A historical framing of white evangelism coincides with contemporary American exceptionalism. With regards to 9/11, this included a re-telling of American history that accented white virtuousness (Silk & Falcous, 2005) in a sporting context that normalized a white-masculinist, militaristic reaction to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> (Stempel, 2006). Until we, as sport management scholars, educators, and practitioners, are better able to understand our role within the context of a racist America, these types of exceptionalist attitudes that promote discriminatory actions towards non-white, non-protestant communities will continue to drive U.S. domestic policy, U.S. foreign policy, and Western global power dynamics. On a smaller scale, this framing continues to justify discriminatory actions and the unjust enrichment of whites within the sport industry (e.g., Singer, Harrison, & Bukstein's, 2010 critical race-based examination of the hiring process for head coaches in college football).



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