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Diversity Analysis - NASCAR

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A Consideration of the Forms and Impacts of Diversity on the
National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR)

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Abstract

NASCAR is an organization which has a long history of exemplifying a stereotypical Southern pride culture into the sport. This Southern pride culture is evident in the symbols present at NASCAR racing events, such as the Confederate flag which can be seen as bumper stickers on spectator vehicles, flying at fan tailgate sites and adorning fan apparel. Although initially most NASCAR events were held in the South, today more than half of its racetrack venues are located outside the Southern United States. With that national migration of racetracks, NASCAR has attempted to diversify itself from being predominantly known as a regional sport to one of national significance. In order to accomplish this, NASCAR has to attract fans who previously did not patronize the sport.

NASCAR revenues are reportedly in excess of \$3 billion annually and their television ratings surpass all other major U.S. sports, with the exception of the NFL. However, NASCAR is a business and all businesses want to grow. In order to accomplish this, NASCAR has to bring in new fans and with them, new sponsors who can infuse the sport with new money and new competition. Current reports have NASCAR car sponsorship ranging from \$500,000, for a small logo on the lower portion of the car, to upwards of \$20 million for a full season, full color and corporate logo on the hood of the car. If NASCAR wants these sponsorship costs to rise, new corporate sponsors must be found. To do this, NASCAR must show that their fans are diverse enough to attract these new corporations with deep pockets for marketing.

A Consideration of the Forms and Impacts of Diversity on the
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The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the historical foundations of the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) which serves to stereotype the organization as a southern white male sport. This study will also analyze the drive for diversity program created by NASCAR as an effort to increase female and minority participation in the sport. Finally, this study will outline the potential financial ramifications if NASCAR is unable to break the negative stereotype associated with the sport of stock car auto racing.

Organizational Profile

The National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) is a sports industry that originated in the 1930s when Appalachian moonshine drivers would increase the power and performance of their automobiles so that they could outrun law enforcement and evade arrest and capture (Lee, Bernthal, Wisenant & Mullane, 2010). The sport got its start when the owners of these modified cars would get together to race and see which car was the fastest. Of course, back then, just like today, the car is only half of the total equation leading to victory because a competent driver is also essential for winning. Typically, NASCAR races are comprised of 43 car teams and occur during a season which lasts from February to October. NASCAR is an organization whose primary purpose is to provide entertainment to fans, thereby receiving revenue in exchange for that entertainment. Obviously, it goes without saying that the more entertaining the races, the more fans that will watch. And, the more fans that watch

the sport, the more revenue NASCAR receives. Therefore, a large fan base is essential for the sport to grow and prosper.

Structural Aspects

It's first President, Bill France, Sr., sanctioned NASCAR's first race in 1948 (Lee et al., 2010). France is the only name NASCAR leadership has known since the organization is currently led by the third generation of the France family. Bill France, Jr. took over for his father and then subsequently turned the industry's reins over to his son Brian France, in 2003 who still serves as the organization's Chief Executive Officer.

NASCAR rules require all cars to maintain the same equipment, engine output and car mechanisms. All cars are required to go through both a pre and post race inspection to ensure compliance with the rules. Consequences for violating the rules can include race suspensions, hefty fines and loss of points which ultimately determine racing season championships.

Each car team is led by an owner who appoints a crew chief to oversee all car mechanisms, crew pit teams, race strategies, and car repairs. The crew chief hires the pit crew who perform all maintenance on the car both during the race and after. The driver is hired by the owner and acts as the face of the team since he or she receives most of the team's publicity. Publicity is essential in NASCAR since the more publicity a team receives, the more it can charge its sponsors to put their logo on its cars.

Human Resource Aspects

Since its beginning, NASCAR has been largely perceived as a Southern sport (Lee et al., 2010). Even though NASCAR still maintains a strong presence in the South, it is taken great strides to expand the sport's racing events throughout the United States.

According to Lee et al., (2010) during the 1960s and 1970s, 75% of NASCAR racetracks were located in the southern portion of the United States. This is one of the biggest reasons why NASCAR earned the stereotype of being a “good ol’ boy sport.” Currently though, only 42% of their racetracks are located in southern states; yet NASCAR still fights against the good ol’ boy stereotype that still persists today.

In an attempt to break this stereotype, NASCAR has initiated several diversity programs aimed at incorporating females and minorities into their fan base as well as their organizational structure. Contrary to their efforts, the presence of the Confederate flag at almost every NASCAR event overshadows NASCAR’s diversity initiatives. This one symbol, which can be viewed either as an image of Southern pride or as an image of racism and oppression, is one of the greatest threats facing NASCAR today due to its divisiveness.

There is question of whether NASCAR’s actions speak louder than its words on the diversity issue. Ten years ago, the Drive 4 Diversity initiative (D4D) was launched seeking to increase female and minority involvement as race car drivers and pit crews. Part of this program targeted the involvement participants aged 8 – 14, so that they could be developed into the next generation of NASCAR fans.

In spite of its efforts, NASCAR has recently been the subject of negative publicity with regards to organizational diversity due to several lawsuits filed against them that alleged racism and sexism within the organization (Woody, 2008; Pockrass, 2012). The first incident involved a promising young Hispanic race car driver who was seeking inclusion in the drive for diversity program for youth. He was refused entrance because he appeared Caucasian and not Hispanic (Pockrass, 2012). This case serves to question

whether NASCAR's diversity efforts are well intended or simply for hype. Another lawsuit involved a female NASCAR official who alleged racial discrimination and sexual harassment within the organization. Both cases were eventually settled out of court.

Within its own organization NASCAR has made a special effort to promote cultural awareness by adopting a zero tolerance policy against discrimination and has rigorously enforced it as evidenced by their suspending a driver who made a racial slur on television. The driver, Jeremy Clements, was suspended indefinitely pending diversity training (Diaz, 2013). NASCAR also provides training to all its employees in the positive aspects of diversity (Diaz, 2013). In fact, NASCAR has even hired Richard Lapchick, Director of the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports at the University of Central Florida to provide diversity training and awareness within the organization (Diaz, 2013).

Political Aspects

The key stakeholders within the sport of NASCAR are the car team owners, the corporate sponsors, the upper echelon of the organization and the fans. Since NASCAR is a privately held organization, it keeps most of its financial data secret and the power within the organization is centered between two main people. First, is its chief executive officer Brian France, and second, is its president Mike Helton. These two people hold the majority of the power within the organization.

NASCAR's main source of competition within the United States is the Indy Racing League (IRL). But even the IRL fails to produce the fan base enjoyed by NASCAR, as evidenced by the major broadcast deals worth a reported \$2.8 billion recently signed by NASCAR (Lee et al., 2010; Mueller, 2008). Politically though,

diversity within NASCAR has been a major sticking point for the organization for many years. And, in a country which highly values diversity, NASCAR's Southern stereotype is one from which it has quietly tried to disassociate itself by launching several diversity initiatives (Sartore-Baldwin & Walker, 2011).

Another political issue NASCAR has faced is protests of its races and boycotts of its sponsor's products due to the prevalence of the Confederate flag at NASCAR events. In 2004, at a race in south Florida, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) vowed to boycott NASCAR sponsors because of the presence of the Confederate flag at NASCAR events. In 2009, another boycott of NASCAR sponsors was threatened by the NAACP and a protest outside the racing venue was scheduled to occur; however, the protest never took place (Jones, 2009).

Symbolic Aspects

As with most sporting events, NASCAR relies heavily on symbolic visualizations. After all, racing is a sport which hands out a trophy for winning each race and hands out an even bigger trophy to the driver who is crowned as the points champion at the end of the season. Further, every car within the race, every driver of every car, along with his crew chief and pit crew, are decked out from head to toe with corporate logos which can cost corporate sponsors between \$500,000 for a small logo on the lower portion of the car to a full season, front hood corporate logo complete with the sponsor's color scheme for a mere \$20 million. Of course, with that you get the driver's race suit, the crew chief's race suit and the pit crew's race suits adorned with your corporate colors and logo (Gill, 2008).

According to Gill (2008), there is evidence to show that NASCAR sponsorship gives corporations a direct link to millions of fans. Gill (2008) further asserts that goodwill is bought by the corporate sponsor because the fans appreciate the corporations allowing the race teams to exist. And, the money spent on NASCAR advertisements may be for good purpose because according to Kinney, McDaniel & Degaris (2008), NASCAR fans have shown a high ability to recall corporate sponsor brands. Their research also showed that NASCAR fans tend to purchase from sponsors of the sport simply because they're involved with NASCAR and that fans feel a sense of loyalty to brands that sponsor their favorite car team. Further evidence by Amato et al., (2005) illustrates that NASCAR's "fan commitment generates a degree of loyalty that is unmatched [by] any other sport in the U.S." (p. 82). Corporate sponsors are well aware of the benefits they receive by sponsoring a car team within the sport. With the corporation's logo, name and trademark on a car team, the sponsor "becomes a significant part of the team's identity and allows for psychological identification and commitments that race fans feel towards the sport and the team/driver they follow" (Gill, 2008, p. 187).

Figure 1: Frame-Related Issues and Areas of Focus (Bolman & Deal, 1997)

Frame	Possible Frame-Related Issues
Structural	rules, regulations, goals, policies, roles, tasks, job designs, job descriptions, technology, chain of command, vertical and horizontal coordinating mechanisms, assessment and reward systems, standard operating procedures, authority spans and structures, spans of control, specialization/division of labor, information systems, management processes
Human resource	needs, skills, relationships, norms, perceptions and attitudes, morale, motivation, training and development, interpersonal and group dynamics, supervision, teams, job satisfaction, participation and involvement, informal organization, support, respect for diversity, formal and informal leadership

Political	key stakeholders, divergent interests, scarce resources, areas of uncertainty, individual and group agendas, sources and bases of power, power distributions, formal and informal resource allocation systems and processes, influence, conflict, competition, politics, coalitions, formal and informal alliances and networks, interdependence, control of rewards and punishment, informal communication channels
Symbolic	culture, rituals, ceremonies, stories, myths, symbols, metaphors, meaning, spirituality, values, vision, charisma, passions and commitments

Diversity Statement Analysis

NASCAR’s diversity mission statement makes specific mention of specifically engaging women and people of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds in all facets of NASCAR (Christley, 2014). A few of NASCAR’s stated diversity objectives are to increase minority and female on track participation as well as to reach more multicultural target markets for sport involvement. Here, NASCAR is specifically looking to increase revenue by bringing in a more diverse audience so that their multicultural target markets will be more attractive to corporate sponsors seeking a more diversified customer base. According to Varra et al., (2004) NASCAR’s diversity statement employs rationalization with regard to gender, race and age because it explains why gender, race and age are important to the organization and the sport of auto racing in general. Further, NASCAR also utilizes reframing with regard to gender and race because NASCAR specifically states that since the inception of the drive for diversity initiative in 2004, NASCAR has specifically targeted minority and female drivers (Christley, 2014). With the reference to a change in issue position since 2004, NASCAR is reframing their stance on incorporating minority and female involvement in the sport. Further, NASCAR seeks to perpetuate their sport by targeting youth; especially kids ages 8-14 for whom they have developed a racing initiative with hopes of creating future stars of the sport. Whether or

not NASCAR's diversity initiatives have been successful is a source of debate which will be covered further in the next section of this paper.

The State of Diversity within the Selected Organization

The state of diversity within NASCAR is a contentious subject, by all accounts. The sport still endures the stereotype that it is purely a Southern White male sport (Lee et al., 2010). To further complicate the issue, Confederate flags fly freely at most NASCAR racing venues (Lee et al., 2010). This serves to further perpetuate the image that NASCAR is a sport for good ol' boy, southern rednecks. NASCAR is well aware of this controversial issue because in a 2005 interview with the *60 Minutes* television program, NASCAR CEO Brian France was confronted by Leslie Stahl, a *60 Minutes* reporter, over the Confederate flag issue ("CBS News," 2005). France essentially avoided the issue by touting NASCAR's success in going into markets outside of the southeastern United States. He also pointed out that NASCAR has an African-American driver in its Craftsman truck series. France also attempted to avoid the Confederate flag issue by stating that NASCAR simply certifies the race event and that the individual racetracks are the ones responsible for policing the actions that occur within their facility.

While NASCAR overtly publicizes a push for more diversity within its ranks, there have been allegations that the organization covertly doesn't want the diversity it claims to embrace (Busbee, 2012; Pockrass, 2012; Woody, 2008). These allegations have made NASCAR a frequent litigant in civil courts in recent years due to several lawsuits alleging racism and sexism within the organization. To further complicate the matter, these lawsuits have not only come from their employees, but also from hopeful participants in their drive for diversity program.

In 2008, former NASCAR official Mauricia Grant, an African American female, alleged racism and sexism in a federal lawsuit she filed against NASCAR. Among other complaints, Grant alleges she was exposed to racially charged names and had to deal with male body parts being exposed in her presence (Woody, 2008). Grant's lawsuit sought \$225 million in damages. NASCAR settled the lawsuit for an undisclosed amount. Additionally, Michael Rodriguez, a drive for diversity candidate, filed a lawsuit against NASCAR claiming that he was disqualified from the program because he appeared "too Caucasian" to participate in a diversity program (Pockrass, 2012, para. 1). Rodriguez claimed that NASCAR officials did not believe he was a minority in that one employee even made the comment that he "looks like the poster boy for the Ku Klux Klan" (Pockrass, 2012, para. 9). One again, NASCAR settled the lawsuit before trial.

A quest for diversity within the sport of stock car auto racing is the main reason NASCAR started the drive for diversity program. Their goal is to target marketable minority and female drivers with local or regional racing experience (Christley, 2014) so that experience can be used as a catalyst for success at the NASCAR level. The drive for diversity curriculum offers an academy style program aimed at developing and training new drivers both on and off the track. Interested participants apply, participate in a racing combine, and then finally have a formal tryout with the organization. Those who are selected to continue are put through a rigorous three-day intensive training program after which selected candidates are formally offered a spot in the drive for diversity program. The program trains participants in all aspects of stock car auto racing in hopes of developing future NASCAR champions.

The drive for diversity program is not without its critics though, because while the program was intended to be a pipeline for females and minorities to enter the sport of racing, complaints have begun to surface that the program is underfunded. Critics also point to the fact that no female or minority driver has come out of this so-called “pipeline” and entered one of NASCAR’s circuits (Smith, 2009). Originally, NASCAR budgeted \$4 million annually for the drive for diversity program. That amount has been increased to \$6 million, but critics still claim that amount is woefully inadequate if NASCAR legitimately wants to develop minority and female drivers (Smith, 2009).

Selected Organizational Outcome

While financial information regarding NASCAR is difficult to obtain, some estimates have its annual revenue in excess of \$3 billion (Lee et al., 2010) and its television ratings surpassing all other major sports except the National Football League (Vega, 2007). Further, the revenue brought in because of its millions of viewers led NASCAR to capitalize on its popularity by signing a television broadcast deal from 2015 - 2024 worth approximately \$8.2 billion (Lee et al., 2010). Since research has revealed that consumers often purchase brands on the sole basis of the perceived personality of the brand product, as compared to competing products (Dees, Bennett & Ferreira, 2010), increasing corporate sponsorship, by increasing sport viewership, is in NASCAR’s best financial interests. Simply put, there are only a limited number of Southern White males in the world and NASCAR has to effectively market their sport to other consumers who do not fit their traditional fan profile.

NASCAR is a business and the primary goal of any business is to make a profit (Ferrell & Hirt, 2013). The more popular the sport of stock car auto racing becomes, the

higher the fees that corporate sponsors will pay to put their logos on car teams. Conversely, any rise in organization's negative publicity will result in corporate sponsor withdrawal and disassociation. Therefore, the more popular NASCAR becomes the more money it makes. Should its popularity decrease, NASCAR will undoubtedly see a decrease in its sponsor revenue. So, it in the organization's best interests to solicit those fans not already involved in the sport in order to increase its fan base. Doing this while keeping its core base, typically identified as the southern white male, content may present NASCAR with a challenge it's not ready to tackle.

Brief Literature Review

Sponsorship is defined by Ukman (1995, p. 2) as "a cash or in-kind fee paid for a property in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property." Few events other than sports can muster the type of excitement and loyalty seen throughout the sporting world. According to Kinney et al., (2008), sponsorship has a more direct impact than simple advertisements that occur during the sporting events broadcast. As such, they create a more crucial link between the sponsoring brand and the event. Further, research by Dees et al., (2010) showed that there was a positive relationship between the personalities of NASCAR drivers in the attitude towards the sponsor of that driver. This research also showed that there was a positive relationship between the personality of the NASCAR driver and the purchase intentions of the fans toward the sponsor of that driver. This would lead us to believe that those sponsors of popular NASCAR drivers would see a biggest return on their sponsorship investment.

Kinney et al., (2008) provided research to determine, in part, if fan involvement was a function of sponsorship brand recall. They also wanted to know if NASCAR

sponsor brand recall was a function of NASCAR specific media use. They found that male respondents were able to recall more sponsor brands than their female counterparts and that level of involvement in the sport by the fan was a statistically significant predictor of sponsor recall. This would lead us to believe that the more heavily involved in the sport a person is the more they will be able to remember the sponsors within the sport.

Since driver personality fit was deemed to be important by Dees et al., (2010), the polarizing effect of the Confederate flag at NASCAR events would seem to be counterproductive within the sport. As a result, current sponsors of the sport, as well as potential future sponsors, may choose to stay away from investing their sponsorship dollars in order to disassociate themselves from this symbol of racism and oppression. Obviously, this would be extremely detrimental to the financial stability of NASCAR even though it has been able to achieve revenues in excess of \$3 billion by catering to fans that have been described as “probably stereotyped more often than any human beings on earth. They are often dismissed as beer-drinking, Winston-smoking, cheeseburger-eating, Republican voting good old boys by people who have never been within a mile of a NASCAR race” (Dutton, 2000, p. 123 – 24).

Sartore-Baldwin and Walker (2011) concluded that NASCAR’s diversity efforts in its drive for diversity program have given the organization a slight boost in its image. Their study, which incorporated both males and females from several self identified minority ethnicities, showed a positive association between the drive for diversity program and NASCAR’s perceived social responsiveness. It also showed an increase in

NASCAR corporate sponsor merchandise consumption due to a perceived positive image from this diversity program.

NASCAR has also displayed a meaningful interest in expanding its fan base in Mexico “in order to dispel the white Anglo-Saxon image with which the sport has been identified” (Mueller, 2008, p. 206). Unfortunately, the results were not as positive as NASCAR had hoped since the only successful Hispanic driver, Juan Pablo Montoya, is Colombian and did not associate well with Mexican fans (Mueller, 2008). Another criticism is that NASCAR did not make the proper financial investment needed to bolster the sport in Mexico because stock car races in Mexico occur on road tracks not the large oval tracks where fans can enjoy race cars traveling upwards of 200 miles an hour.

Positionality Statement

According to Milner (2007) researchers must be aware of dangers seen, unseen and unforeseen. Here, with NASCAR, the drive for diversity initiative they started was well intended, but really doesn't do enough to offset the negativity that comes with the large numbers of the southern good ol' boy fans seen at stock car sporting events. I justify this assertion by pointing out that the drive for diversity initiative has had very little publicity while the visibility of Confederate flags at NASCAR events can be seen by millions. Moreover, NASCAR's refusal to rid their sporting events of this racist symbol is further evidence of critical race theory, which as stated by Solorzano and Yosso (2001), challenges the dominant discourse of race and racism and examines how minority groups are subordinated. NASCAR's overt ignorance of its fans stereotype, as well as its refusal to address the issue of racist symbols at its sporting events, is further evidence that it treats minority groups as unimportant. Public opinion is starting to turn against

NASCAR condoning racist and oppressive symbols at its events, much the same way that heightened negative publicity is forcing the disappearance of college sports mascots that are deemed offensive. And, as with any hypersensitive issue, I believe it is only a matter of time until consistent negative publicity forces some NASCAR corporate sponsors to threaten to pull out of the sport. The resulting significant potential significant loss of sponsorship revenue would no doubt force NASCAR to face their stereotype image head on. Simply put, until the money dries up, NASCAR will continue on with business as usual ignoring the symbols typically associated with their sport which perpetuates their negative stereotype.

The issue of condoning the Confederate flag can be summed up by Milner (2007) who states that Whites will only tolerate promoting of the interest of minority groups when those interests promote the interests of Whites, as well. It would stand to reason then barring an outright ban on the flag that the removal of Confederate flags from NASCAR events will only occur when it's in the interest of those people who fly that flag. Milner (2007) outlines the seen, unseen and unforeseen dangers that can emerge from colorblind policies. The seen danger here lies with NASCAR blaming the minority groups who oppose the flag instead of taking a policy that any oppressive symbols, regardless of the group offended, are prohibited. The unseen danger is NASCAR's inability to bring in a new revenue stream from sponsors who would patronize the sport if it were not stereotyped as a redneck sport. The unforeseen danger is that by failing to address the issues of racism, and the stereotyped fan, NASCAR may very well be creating corporate sponsors, as well as potential fans, who will never patronize the sport because of their frustration with the organization's tolerance of perceived racism.

Recommendations/Implications for the Selected Organization

Research by Dees et al., (2010) shows that there is a positive relation between the opinion fans have of NASCAR drivers and what those fans thought of the corporation that sponsors the driver. Moreover, these fans attitude towards the sponsor, and the sponsor's products, directly affected their purchase intentions. One major factor in what brand consumer chooses is the perceived brand personality of the product. This means that consumers often purchase brands solely on their perception of the brand's personality as compared to a competitor's brand. Dees et al., (2010) also state that a celebrity endorsement, such as those seen in NASCAR when a car team adorns their vehicle with a sponsor's logo, elicits a positive purchase intention towards the sponsor's brand. As such, having positive driver images will produce more revenue. If NASCAR wishes to bring in additional sponsors who have not previously patronize the sport than they will have to bring in a more diverse fan base which appeals to these new sponsors. Doing so will create sponsor competition and increase the amount of money car teams receive due to their corporate sponsorship. Since current estimates have a full season, full-color and logo sponsorship between \$15 million and \$20 million, the potential ramifications of not bringing in new corporate sponsorship with the ability to pay these fees are big.

Further research by (Sartore-Baldwin & Walker, 2011) shows that by most accounts the stereo typical NASCAR fan is an "unintelligible, Confederate flag-waving, White, southern, good ol' boy" (p. 489). The type of consumer does not appeal to every organization with the deep pockets that are required to sponsor a NASCAR team. And while the drive for diversity program can be labeled as a good start for diversity within NASCAR, it may not be enough to increase consumer patronage outside of the stereo

typical NASCAR fan. If NASCAR does the socially responsible thing, which is to ban oppressive symbols such as the Confederate flag at their events, it may contribute to a more positive attitude and provide a direct result in consumer's willingness to patronize the sport.

Kinney et al., (2008) provided statistical evidence to show that NASCAR sponsor brand recall was high among NASCAR fans. To further their point, if fan involvement grew substantially there would be more ability to recall the corporate sponsors within the sport. Therefore, corporate sponsors would be able to realize higher market share and subsequently higher revenue. This, in turn, would provide corporations increased incentive to sponsor teams within the sport. Increase competition means more revenue. And since NASCAR's primary goal is to make a profit, they would be able to realize this goal. As stated by Gill (2008), NASCAR fans are among the most brand loyal of all sports fans and they tend to show a propensity to make purchasing decisions based on the product sponsorship within the sport of stock car auto racing. If NASCAR were able to diversify their fan base they would thereby increase the number of consumers available to their corporate sponsors. This would also provide a much-needed incentive to other corporations who have not previously entered the sport of stock car auto racing to open their pocketbooks for car team sponsorship.

NASCAR's attempt to bring its sport to Mexico, which provides for a potentially large fan base, is in direct opposition to NASCAR's attempts to bring females the sport. Mueller (2008) states Mexican culture will not as readily accept female involvement in the sport because Mexican culture puts men in a power position over women. So, Mexican males want a "man's sport" and do not want the involvement of women in it. It

may also serve to provide what Muller (2008, p. 214) calls a “machismo vs. moonshine” effect when NASCAR’s competing interests run in opposition to each other. However, with estimates putting the US Hispanic purchasing power at \$397 billion (Mueller, 2008), NASCAR may be foolhardy not to attempt soliciting the sport to Hispanics. This would mean NASCAR would have to do that which it most likely fears...banning the Confederate flag from its racing venues. Here, it seems reasonable to assume that with Confederate flags flying at NASCAR events, minority groups would be ill inclined to involve themselves with the sport. The loss of this potential revenue stream may be more than even NASCAR realizes.

In Summary

That Confederate flag, which provides such strong emotions among individuals, is one of the biggest threats facing NASCAR’s ability to bring in new fans and new corporate sponsors today. NASCAR President Mike Helton has stated that the NASCAR is not condoning the flag at its events because NASCAR only sanctions the race. It is the individual racetrack’s responsibility to police the actions that occur at the racing event. That is a cowardly excuse on the part of NASCAR. By ignoring the flag at its events, NASCAR is condoning it. By condoning it, NASCAR keeps their loyal southern White male fan base blissful, which I assert is their goal. However, if the Confederate flags were replaced by the Nazi flag, would NASCAR continue to ignore the issue?

If NASCAR wants to bring in new viewers and the new money that will come with an increasingly diversified fan base, then NASCAR has to show by its actions and ethics that it is a sport for all people. They are woefully inadequate in making that statement. Until the loss of potential fans, and the revenue they could provide NASCAR

is calculated, NASCAR will continue with “business as usual” maintaining a well deserved stereotype as the sport for the southern White male.

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