

Minority Outsiders: An Examination of the NFL's Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion Habits in Hiring Head Coaches

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"You have to fight forever" (J. Wooten)

Abstract

In a post-racial society, the premier beacon of racial opportunity, which is the National Football League has advanced beyond racially plagued issues related to African American athlete player representation, position segregation and has seemingly turned the corner concerning employing African American quarterbacks as the face of a franchise. However, at its peak NFL teams have only once had 8 minority head coaches employed during the same football season. In fact, the general trend appears to be no more than three to four minority head coaches out of 32 teams spanning some thirty years or more. This failure in numerical diversity, continues to be the NFL's Achilles heel despite recommendations from the Fritz Pollard Alliance, implementation of the Rooney Rule and a myriad of diversity, equity, and inclusion Studies. The qualitative component (open ended interview sessions) of this research indicates that African Americans who have spent time as either a player, coach, and/or have held administrative positions of influence have found that their voices regarding the nuances of effective minority head coaching hires have been mostly maligned or treated as fringe conversation. To this end this supplemental report details the intuitive intel that the NFL should take seriously in its approach to clearing the last racial hurdle of racial equity and inclusion with respect to equitable hiring practices.

DEDICATION

This research report on the NFL as a league and its composition of 32 football teams is the result of Mr. John Wooten's heavy lifting. Mr. John Wooten was instrumental as he essentially built the qualitative data base of general managers, coaches, athletic directors, and journalists who participated in this study. When Mr. Wooten would say "give me two seconds" that meant he was reaching for his phone to provide a contact that would prove beneficial for this research report. When Mr. Wooten would say "I'm going to give you this for you to have in your pocket" that meant he was disclosing firsthand accounts of events that demand authentic presentation with respect to not only race in America but also race in the NFL. Thus, this report is dedicated to Mr. John Wooten because of his "two seconds" and "pocket knowledge." To take it one step further, by virtue of Mr. John Wooten's sixty-two-year tenure in the NFL as a player, scout, executive, coalition builder, and contributor to the NFL's efforts at diversity, equity, and inclusion in the form of being co-founder of the Black Coaches Visitation Program, the Fritz Pollard Alliance, and being a staunch ally contributor, to the original blueprint of the Rooney Rule, John deserves to be inducted into The Pro-Football Hall of Fame, immediately.

INTRODUCTION

Professional sports share a unique relationship with American race relations. At times sports have provided a necessary outlet whereby fans come together to cheer for their favorite teams for a 2 to 4-hour time frame during which troublesome race matters are rendered neutral. Political, economic, class, and cultural divisiveness are rendered neutral and replaced by fanhood, cheering for, smiling, high-fiving, hugging, sharing food, and drinks in one location where people experience the same emotional highs and lows over a team's winning or losing. At other times, sports have provided a catalyst to challenge America's practice of upholding inequality by way of seeming to endorse systemic racism. The kind of systemic racism that manifests as discrimination creating opportunity gaps, inequity in social mobility, job opportunity, housing accommodations, education, resource and material acquisitions, indifference about reverence for life, and the right to impartial justice. At best sports can be entertaining, serve as a platform for racial awareness and at its worse can reflect mainstream America's collective conscience that seems welded to traditional assumptions about racial deservedness, inter-racial mobility, employment competition, racial dominance symbolism in racially different intelligence and athletic ability (Moye 1998).

The purpose of Part 1 of this research is to provide sociological coverage of the NFL through reviewing the literature that corresponds to its 102-season history. The job of a sociologist is to offer a sociological lens examining patterns of behavior and interactions the NFL engaged in while coping with historical challenges relative to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The purpose for doing so is to offer a logical forecast of how the NFL can deal with the same issues in an evolving professional sports league.

The National Football League arguably is not a microcosm of society. Rather the National Football League is a market based capitalistic parallel universe of its own mirroring the peaks and valleys of institutional, pluralistic and individualistic human agency (Anderson 1996). Look no further than owner's decision to impose a league segregation initiative essentially banning black players from the NFL during the Great Depression years and the subsequent economic woes and high unemployment from 1934 to 1946. Owners felt that the league needed to gain credibility and respectability and could only do so by not giving black players jobs when so many whites were experiencing labor market displacement (Lomax 1999). An example of this would be the decision to prohibit black players from participating, thereby choosing segregation primarily between 1926-1946. The National Football League has always been an elite entity of owners of a mode of production and everyone else are workers or subordinates who represent a class that is subject to the consequences of what happens to and with them at the expense of elites' decisions about opportunities for economic, and social mobility. An example of this would be the NFL's running narrative about discrimination and source of disgruntlements over the inequitable treatment in hiring. Just mention names like Jimmy Raye II and Sherm Lewis and the frenzy of polarized conversation commences. Taking it one step further, elites or owners of the mode of production are interested in maintaining power and staying in an ownership position for as many generations as possible. While workers, sometimes referred to as subordinates are competing amongst themselves for positions that define their nearness to elitism or a position that affords some level of distinction and social mobility. Amongst their

competition class of workers or subordinates, no matter the elevation in status within the institution, their presence is about classism and racial casting. This is sociological jargon, straight from elements of conflict theory, which situates owners, and workers as continuously engaged in a struggle for resources and protection of interests (Cureton 2002).

Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the NFL is about understanding the League and its 32 team organizations that position themselves as a family unit in the business of sport entertainment for profit. The average value for teams was estimated to be 1 billion in 2010 and has topped 3 billion dollars in 2020 (Vrooman 2012; Ozanian and Badenhausen 2020). The NFL is a moneymaking machine and monopolizes the sport entertainment viewing industry, which means despite its cultural hiccups on diversity, equity, and inclusion, there was an insignificant impact on the NFL's financial profits. Ultimately, this implies that diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts remain contingent upon the good will of team owners, league accountability, and a collectively dormant perhaps economically pacified group of minority athletes who make up close to 70% of NFL rosters (NewKirk 2019; and Rhoden 2006). NFL team owners have long since figured out that they don't have to somehow transition to the fundamental premise of consensus theory, which promotes a specific group (in this case the NFL) as a mutual benefit association working towards the common good and the general welfare of everyone who is connected more so by cultural human agency than by the exploitation bottom line of profit motives. In fact, the NFL, functions within the context of a "survivalist league-think." Meaning, the league of 32 teams is only as strong as the weakest economic team and that can be remedied by a percentage of economic profit sharing (Vrooman 2012: 7). Stated another way, NFL team ownership is economic white privilege and any person occupying a position outside of team ownership is expendable (Newkirk 2019; Duru 2011; Rhoden 2006; and Cureton 2002). No matter the cultural deficits or diversity, shortcomings, the promise of economic profits allows for the proverbial game initiated by a routine kick-off for what will be 102 seasons on September 9th, 2021.

The Sociological Imagination Intersects with Youthful Exuberance

Sociology is a social science that examines human agency, culture, choice, behavioral outcomes, and interaction patterns. In attempting to understand, forecast and even predict the likelihood of a phenomenon occurring, the best indicator is significantly related to what has transpired in the past. I am a sociologist, and the NFL is the unit of analysis for this report. I am also a fan of the NFL. The point of intersection is being a fan and a trained sociologist hired to research the professional game of football.

I grew up in the 1970's in the heights or low-income buildings in Washington D. C. infamously referred to as Dodge City. The only shows that my stepfather would watch on television was war movies, sitcoms, and made for television documentaries about the Vietnam war. Carter's Army (also known as Black Brigade), the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (M*A*S*H) and Hogan's Heroes were infectious. I wanted to join the army. My young mind was fascinated by the army uniform and soldiers were heroes. I could not be talked out of thinking that soldiering was a brave and noble cause. My stepfather was a fan of the National Football League and liked the Washington Redskins, now known as the Washington

Football Team. When I was not watching war movies or football, I was outside playing football with the neighborhood kids. We played “throw up football.” This was a very physical game where someone would throw the football in the air and whoever caught it, tried to score a touchdown. Mind you, the field was just some makeshift partial grass, partial dirt, and sometimes glassy area that we called a playground. Whoever caught the ball tried to run towards the touchdown area while everyone else tried to tackle him by any means necessary. My very first experience with organized football was when the neighborhood’s older boys arranged to play against a rival neighborhood at a local park. What was significant about this is that the older boys spent more time street hustling in the form of gangs and often positioned themselves as neighborhood toughs. Usually, street politics and drama ruled our neighborhoods but on rare occasions street peace treaties were implemented so that entire neighborhoods could come together and watch the boys they looked up to, play organized tackle football, complete with referees and a small coaching staff, which were typically the neighborhood’s fathers. For me, these older boys became giants as they put on the football equipment loaned to them by a nearby recreational center. These neighborhood heroes, now giants would play in the spirit of competition. There was a distinct smell of grass and a painted field because recreational centers also loaned the equipment needed to paint the field. There were tents and tables with barbequed foods, a line of ice-cream trucks, and the fellowship and cheers from the small crowd, which consisted of residents who were normally at odds with one another. Football had arrived in my neighborhood and it spelled relief from the stressful routine activities of being a resident in low-income housing. Still the most attractive of all was the sound of helmets colliding and pads popping. Tackling or watching older boys crash into one another just seemed to be a beautiful attraction.

At 12 years old, my fascination with becoming a soldier and a football player would merge. In 1980, the movie *Fighting Back, The Story of Rocky Bleier* aired. I was mesmerized by Rocky being a soldier and then of course was traumatized when he was injured in the Vietnam war. Dan Rooney’s Pittsburgh Steelers remained loyal to Rocky’s draft status and kept his opportunity to become a Steeler open (Roberts and Welky 2001). Rocky’s comeback story was inspiring and his storybook career with the Steelers was impressive, which is why I became a fan of Dan Rooney and the Pittsburgh Steelers. After graduating from high school, wanting to be a soldier was supplanted by wanting to go to college and play football, which I was able to achieve as a student for 4 years, earning a bachelor’s degree and football player for two seasons 1988-1989 at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University under Coach Bill Hayes, a Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) and Central Inter-Collegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) Historically Black Colleges Hall of Famer. I tell this story because my love for the NFL and the Pittsburgh Steelers remains as innocent as that 12-year-old boy. Of course, I would never make it to the NFL, but I have been given a chance to contribute something of value that will hopefully effect equal opportunity for minority coaches in the NFL.

The Call on June 24th, 2021

The origin of this report stems from a conversation between Mr. Rod Graves, Executive Director of the Fritz Pollard Alliance and Mr. James Hasty, Managing Partner of Eneje Consulting LLC. Mr. Rod Graves suggested Mr. Hasty conduct a research study that extends knowledge of coach criteria beyond quantitative statistics. Mr. Graves has served as a General Manager for the Arizona Cardinals and stated that his experience with the Bidwills was enriching and outstanding. For Mr. Graves, a coach criteria should include foundational principles that indicate how a potential candidate manages his personal life in addition to the unpredictable and at times adverse circumstances related to an NFL team.

Due to Mr. James Hasty's, (a player for 14 years in the NFL, with the New York Jets and Kansas City Chiefs) desire to explore diversity, equity, and inclusion in the NFL, I was hired to conduct a study to examine the nature and extent of equal opportunity in head coach hiring decisions in the NFL. I enthusiastically accepted the challenge. The call on June 24th, 2021 is noteworthy because it provided a chance to speak directly with the Commissioner. This report defers to Mr. John Wooten who has stated *"4 Commissioners, I have played and worked, no Commissioner has done the work of moving toward complete diversity, and inclusion than Roger Goodell."* Therefore, it was a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak with the Commissioner about diversity, equity, and inclusion.

NFL Culture Wars from 1934-1990's

The National Football League's 2021 season, set to start September 9th, 2021 will mark the NFL's 102 season. When the football is kicked off there will be 5 out of 32 (15.6%) minority head coaches, 8 out of 32 (25%) minority assistant head coaches, 2 out of 32 (6%) minority offensive coordinators, 12 out of 32 (38%) minority defensive coordinators, and 255 out of 676 (37.8%) position head coaches who are minorities. There will be 5 out of 32 (15.6%) minority general managers and 2 out of 32 (6%) minority team owners. Progress with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion amongst coaches depends on a look at raw numbers or percentages. Looking at the raw numbers suggest that there remains a substantial gap in minorities occupying coaching positions and looking at percentages arguably, permits some applause that could be quickly interrupted when considering that minority athletes make up close to 70% of players on NFL rosters.

The NFL will be 102 years old at the start of the 2021 season and the question of diversity, remains best captured by a conversation that took place some 40 years ago between Mr. Tex Schramm, General Manager with the Dallas Cowboys for 29 years (1959-1989) and Mr. John Wooten, Director of Professional Personnel for 11 years (1980-1991). Mr. John Wooten served as a scout for the Dallas Cowboys from 1975 until promotion in 1980.

Schramm: *I just don't understand what you're doing, Woots,*

Wooten: *I'm trying to make the League better. I'm trying to make it what it should be.*

Schramm: *Okay, but I don't know why you have to go to all of these meetings. It's like you're saying you want to have an all-black franchise.*

Wooten: *I never said that. I love the NFL. I love the NFL as much as you love it, but I don't understand why we don't have black head coaches or general managers.*

Schramm: *When I'm hiring, I know who I want.*

Wooten: *Well of course, but we're not arguing whether you know who you want or not, we're arguing whether you got the best guy. How can you tell me you got the best guy when you haven't interviewed all these guys? (Duru 2011:56).*

The nature of Schramm and Wooten's relationship as friends who at times would hold contentious conversations that polarized their positions make it hard to determine if their arguments were friendly bantering or were they both equally intense to the point where Schramm was just as curious as he was suspicious about Wooten's involvement in diversity meetings. Schramm disclosed a concern about the emergence of an all-black franchise. While Wooten was simply looking to diversify the league because it would make the league better. With Wooten, there is a march towards a winning proposition that includes minority head coaches and with Schramm there are reserved rights with respect to decision making that owners are entitled (Duru 2011).

Still the NFL of the 1960's and 1970's was racially turbulent with respect to culture clashes, team ownership investment in white ethnocentrism, player revolts, boycotts and threats to defect to competing leagues like the American Football League (AFL). During the 1960's NFL teams were adjusting to the influx of black players, rising towards 30% and Commissioner Pete Rozelle was contending with voices of discontent relative to black player team quotas, black player's contracts, the NFL yielding to social pressures regarding civil entitlements related to equal lodging, dining, exposure to fan racism, and discrimination, lack of security and protection for black athletes, silence and complicity with regards to restrictive neighborhood covenants. In the 1970's there were rumblings from the league that football had provided an avenue for merit employment and should therefore be applauded for improving the plight of black men, black families and black communities. The NFL as a League and teams opined that they were ahead of the American curve when it came to fulfilling the American dream of opportunism. Sociologist Jonathon Brower contended that the NFL while perhaps engaging in self-anointing as the beacon of opportunity, also defaulted into thinking that it was their duty to uphold traditional white-middle class values centering whiteness as the exemplary example of American values, while simultaneously positioning black culture as something that taints the purity of white American values, inclusive of its most beloved sport, football (Lomax 1998).

Just when it seemed like the Civil Rights Movement had advanced inter-racial relations by raising inter-racial social appraisals, and potential for equitable opportunities on and off the field for professional football, a popular commentator would cast a racially polarizing stone. One commentator seemed to harp on the pulse of white conservatism, reminding the newly impacted post-civil rights generation that the growing popularity of professional football and the escalating percentages of visible black players did not mean class or caste racial tolerance. In fact, Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder seemed to sound the alarm of the inevitable racial takeover and complete dominance of blacks in professional football at every level. In the late 1980’s Mr. Snyder who was eventually fired by CBS infamously opined about the genetic superiority of black athletes, on the field positional dominance and ultimately a push to secure coaching jobs occupied by whites. On Martin Luther King’s designated birthday in 1988 Ed Hotelling asked Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder a CBS football commentator about blacks in football to which the response was

Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder: If they take over coaching like everybody wants them to, there is not going to be anything left for white people. I mean all the players are black the only thing that the whites control is the coaching jobs. Now I’m not being derogatory about it but that’s all that is left for them. The black talent is beautiful, it’s great and it’s out there. The only thing left for whites is a couple of coaching jobs. It’s all right with me—in reference to black coaches—I’m pretty sure they will take over that pretty soon too” Jimmy (Anderson, 1996:362 and Sharbutt 1988:1).

An Integrated NFL, Civil Rights and Black Flight

There are two statements that this section will focus on: (1) the NFL is a moneymaking machine and monopolizes the sport entertainment viewing industry, which means despite its cultural hiccups on diversity, equity, and inclusion, there was an insignificant impact on the NFL’s financial profits. Ultimately, this implies that diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts remains contingent upon the good will of team owners, league accountability, and a collectively dormant perhaps economically pacified group of minority athletes who make up close to 70% of NFL rosters; and (2) in the 1970’s there were rumblings from the league that football had provided an avenue for merit employment and should therefore be applauded for improving the plight of black men, black families and black communities. The NFL as a League and teams opined that they were ahead of the American curve when it came to fulfilling the American dream of opportunism. To the first statement concerning collectively dormant perhaps economically pacified group of minority athletes. This statement is definitely not true for athletes coming into the league between 1946 (end of a segregated NFL) and the 1970’s. There are undeniable examples of black athletes who were pioneers of the game, combatted racial ignorance and intolerance, and managed to display their athletic talents while also maintaining a revolutionary stance against oppression as early as 1920 until League segregation and then picking up the mantle of athletic exceptionalism post segregation in 1946. Athletes who stepped into the roles where Joe Follis (first black player of what was arguably the semi-pro era of the NFL), Robert “Rube” Marshall and a small band of brothers that have fallen out of academic and

journalistic attention because of contributions made by Fritz Pollard and Paul Robeson (Lomax 1998). Even after desegregation, the NFL as a league was beholden to cultural mandates and restrictions imposed by team owners. Leading the charge for labor suppression of black athletes was Washington Redskins owner, George P. Marshall. Mr. Marshall fashioned himself as an owner who would at times yield to the scrutiny of his fan base, which led not only to player segregation, player stacking, and player stagnation but also the message that black players detract from the game, thus making it less pure.

Distance in history has been a friend to political correctness and thus the blame for segregation and all things adverse to the success of the black athlete would be blamed on owners having good will as they aimed to protect the purity and respectability of the game. The “good ole boy” statement is often trotted out but remains elusive except it strike down equality and equity while at the same time making a thunderous clap that owners will continue to own, and players simply play. Progress will be measured by what is good for the network of 32 teams operating as one unit, “the survivalist mentality” to secure protections, power, wealth, and resources that has generational replacement from within, and not by way of the chosen few that get to lead a team onto the field of play (Cureton 2019, Vrooman 2012; Duru 2011; and Cureton 2002). Moreover, conversations have elevated to racist and discriminatory decisions that were carried out based on integrity, and good business decisions as it relates to making the league profitable during a cultural combustion as the presence of more and more black athletes meant sharing otherwise all white housing accommodations, and places of leisure with black families and a black fan base. At some point, there must be a definitive statement about the reason for segregation and the snail’s pace to desegregate teams. Only part of the reason for a segregated NFL can be laid at the feet of American politics, business models and cultural combustion stemming from increased shared spaces and places between blacks and whites. Stripping this language away leaves us with there was no appetite for the presence of blacks who were perceived as social health hazards. To exhaust vocabulary distinctions that occupied the minds of mainstream America, not excluding team owners given they are also tied to America’s cultural DNA promoting white elitism at the expense of blackness as the antithesis of white means there was no appetite for too many black athletes who did in fact conjure images of a threat to social order, control, and balance because they were still black bogeymen (Cureton 2020; Cureton 2019; Silberman 1964; Du Bois 1978, 1953 and 1920). What part of America’s cultural DNA that fashions black skin as something alien and threatening transcended time and has found some way to occupy space in a post-modern NFL as a League of 32 teams?

Of course, none of this sat well with the revolutionary types who would add in the impact of colorism and other forms of intra-racial turmoil. Certainly, there was nothing dormant or passive about Mr. John Wooten, Mr. Jim Brown, Mr. Bobby Mitchell, Mr. Don Perkins, Mr. Clarence Peaks, and Mr. Lenny Moore (Rhoden 2006; and Lomax 1998). This by no means is an exhaustive list and every day that passes where men like these are not examined for their impact on racial implications within the National Football League and American race relations, represents a tragedy for those who fashion themselves as scholarly

fans of the game and African American academics who step into college classrooms claiming to discuss race in an American Society without dedicating time to the impact of race on sports. The revolution within the sport mirrored the pace of the civil rights movement in the form of civil disobedience, but also struck a black nationalist tone in the form of threats to take black athletic talents to competing football leagues and as a result posed a significant threat to owners' financial profits. Additionally, the most important piece was the push towards economic independence where athletes were sowing financial seeds back into the communities that were responsible for raising them. Certainly, the athletes of this era (1950's through 1970's) understood the responsibility of what Du Bois coined "the talented tenth" (Du Bois 1903). More than that the revolutionary athlete understood that black power meant financial black independence, keeping the black dollar in the black community, protection of black bodies from domestic terrorism and the obvious exposure to potential death on foreign soil fighting for freedoms that were not being fully granted on American soil. Thus, many athletes stood in support of Cassius Clay as he stood in opposition to the Vietnam war and/or stood in protest as a conscientious objector to the level of citizen disenfranchisement and blocked existentialism, which are huge indicators of an inequitable American Dream (Ture and Hamilton 1992).

Why is this important history for consideration when dealing with a report on the NFL? It is important because being historically reflexive about the plight of black athletes presents a human element that data will reveal (in part 2 of this report) is an important consideration when hiring minority coaches. What are the odds, that owners of NFL teams and other decision makers have any awareness of what it has meant to be a black athlete who became an African American athlete by way of sport integration and thus performing on the field while contending with a racially toxic America, a toxic American sport, and an evolving black community? It is no wonder that efforts at diversity, equity, and inclusion have had highs and lows and have not to date achieved consistent success. The hard questions for a post-modern NFL are: (1) what is the racial demerit that still must be overcome; (2) what is the threshold for convincing team owners and decisions makers that a minority does not alter, create an imbalance, shift in power or stain a team's identity.; (3) what is the threshold for convincing a decision maker that a minority coach will be guided by racial neutrality and/or this will be his dominant characteristic in the face of racial turbulence; and (4) are owners looking for a coach that will provide cover by way of support even under such conditions where the team's decision makers have offended its minority fan base? These hard questions are addressed in part 2 of this report.

To the initial questions posed on page 7, concerning the NFL's profit margins despite its record on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The fact that there is an economic survivalist mentality guaranteeing financial sharing amongst the best and the worst teams allows for a lack of sustained interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion. State another way, there are no immediate hard hitting financial damages that can't be somehow offset by profit sharing in the NFL. Ultimately, this implies that diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts remain contingent upon the good will of team owners. The second statement the NFL lamented,

“football had provided an avenue for merit employment and should therefore be applauded for improving the plight of black men, black families and black communities” deserves an opposing viewpoint because a one-sided view speaks to privilege and should be countered for reason of racial understanding. The NFL as a League and teams opined that they were ahead of the American curve when it came to fulfilling the American dream of opportunism. This claim borders on business narcissism and the belief that the opportunism in integration means a wholesale improvement for the black community. This assumption is embedded in institutional arrogance by assuming that black communities are by and large economically, socially, culturally, and even spiritually bankrupt or somehow suffering without the advantages of integration and assimilation. This assumption draws the foregone conclusion that the NFL is a meritocracy. Finally, this assumption fails to consider that class stratification has an adverse impact on previously settled black communities. To the first assumption, the blueprint for economic independence was laid out in places like Tulsa Oklahoma, Rosewood Florida, Durham and Wilmington North Carolina. Black Nationalist’s and Black Power Movements moved and seized upon economic independence and this very same blueprint birthed the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense as well as activist’s street gangs in places like Chicago, Oakland, and New York (Cureton, 2021, 2020 and 2019; and Ture and Hamilton 1992). To the second assumption regarding the NFL being a meritocracy. A meritocracy implies that coaching decisions are less about unique notions embedded in personal images, social fitness and interpersonal appraisals and more about a system being in place to objectively measure ingredients of performance success. At worst the NFL is comprised of far too many NFL teams that cling to an owner’s image of what “he wants in a coach” and at best the NFL has been comprised of NFL teams that have had decision makers that were intentional in hiring minorities (e.g., Tex Schramm, Dan Rooney, Bill Walsh, and Al Davis from an older generation). Still a more accurate statement is that the NFL’s version of a meritocracy rests on a continuum of decisions made by people in positions of power who need to think it is plausible for a minority coach to be in a leadership role as a winning proposition without fears of encroaching on the dynamics of ownership powers nor their secular sanctuary of family values. Stated another way, the NFL’s version of meritocracy is beholden to a calculation were there must be a race neutral candidate who is effectively a non-threat to the status quo and does not potentially threaten the generational power structure, wealth and removal of a white male as the patriarchal figurehead (Cureton, 2020; Rhoden 2006; and Moyer 1998). To the third assumption, it is ill advised to think black communities were devoid of functional cultural dynamics that promoted intact families, community homogeneity of values and the general welfare of community residents. Perhaps the NFL is guilty of subscribing to the same unforeseen pitfalls that the civil rights movement failed to fully realize. Meaning integration and equal opportunity provided access to resources that eventually intra-racially stratified classes causing a stripping away of community heroes, and professional mentors. Additionally, the reverberations of integration were numerical departure and an assimilationist cultural framework or mindset of white conservatism, which effected a declination in the quality of education, culture, and sports at historically black colleges. Unfortunately, integration and assimilation in American society

and the NFL transformed far too many once profound leaders who were athletes to social, cultural and material robots having no desire or conviction to engage in any revolution that would benefit the masses more than themselves. Ultimately, integration and assimilation manifest as black flight, which is wholesale intra-racial economic, social, cultural, physical, spatial, and spiritual abandonment and so now there is a permanent underclass of blacks who themselves are immersed in subcultural politics that are distanced from mainstream America (Cureton 2020; Cureton 2019; Wilson 2009; Rhoden 2006; West 2001, Lomax 1998; Dyson 1996; Wilson 1996 and 1987). Why is this important for NFL owners and decision makers to understand? Being informed about region of the country, residency and socialization provides context clues that are critical in filling in the blanks when thinking about a coach's image and therefore his candidacy for hire. This information is equally important for minority coaches because it can contribute to a coach's confidence in proclaiming that he too, needs to feel a level of comfort before accepting a head coach position. Miami Dolphins current head coach, Brian Flores believes that confidence and comfortability are critical criteria for a successful interview. What steps have African Americans taken to alleviate the adverse psychological processes that are operating in the minds of owners who have preconceived notions of the image of a coach? By image such a candidate for a coaching position would need to be white or have demonstrated that his blackness is more indicative of a non-threatening race neutral coach who understands his place as an advanced on the field general more than someone who aspires to become a team owner (Thornton 2009).

The Rooney Rule: Pre and Post Dynamics of Fair Competition 1990-2000

The Rooney Rule was and remains a necessary strategy to bridge the gap between "what coaches want" (their image of a coach) and who is professionally ready. It is worth repeating that the Rooney Rule is the product of one exchange that happened between Mr. John Wooten and Mr. Tex Schramm over 40 years ago.

Schramm: *When I'm hiring, I know who I want.*

Wooten: *Well of course, but we're not arguing whether you know who you want or not, we're arguing whether you got the best guy. How can you tell me you got the best guy when you haven't interviewed all these guys? (Duru 2011:56).*

The Rooney Rule does not happen without a cadre of lawyers, long-time activist athletes, an academic study that contributed to a hall of fame report and finally decision makers that can be classified as Commissioners, owners, league executives, and influential coaches who had proven that they could be counted on to advance the interest of minorities who were seeking consideration for merit-based opportunities and as having strong intent to correct long standing racial disparities. Prominent civil rights lawyers Cyrus Mehri and Johnnie Cochran saw a need to challenge the NFL's labor racial disparities. They hired an academic, Dr. Janice Madden to conduct a study, which confirmed adverse racial disparities in coaching opportunities, and coaching tenure. The Mehri, Cochran, Madden report, famously known as *Black Coaches in the National Football League: Superior Performance*,

Inferior Opportunities soon became a hot button topic amongst the NFL's governing body and team owners. Activist athletes, led by John Wooten who had been addressing racial disparities for over 40 years teamed up with Gilliam, Younger and Mitchell to initially focus on opportunities for black head coaches. Wooten, Gilliam, and Younger would influence then Commissioner Pete Rozelle to accept the Black Coaches Visitation Program. This of course caught the attention of another progressive mind in Bill Walsh who had an internship program that was expanded to include minority coaching opportunities in the NFL. Hence, the shift from concentrating on black head coaches became inclusive of all minorities in 1987.

Although the NFL's executive vice president and general manager Jeff Pash fundamentally concluded that the threat to successful litigation was more about sensationalism, he intentionally moved progressively to convince the right people to engage Mehri and Cochran, which resulted in NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue's attention. Commissioner Tagliabue made sure each team received a copy of the report and two diversity teams were commissioned. One diversity team was comprised of team owners, led by Dan Rooney and the other diversity team was comprised of team executives who were forward thinking and vocal when it came to opportunities for minority advancement for head coaching positions. Fundamentally, the Fair Competition Resolution, which implied that there is a need for serious diverse candidacy during hiring cycles did not quite overcome the perception that it was an attempt to force owners to hire minorities. In other words, opposition to the Fair Competition Resolution perceived it as lawyers trying to tell owners how to conduct business. The outsider status of Mehri and Cochran's Fair Competition Resolution would eventually be adopted as a NFL League policy due to the coalition formation with Wooten, Winslow, Gilliam, Younger, and the continuous growth of support from other minority voices inside the NFL, which would become the Fritz Pollard Alliance in 2003, and Dan Rooney. Dan Rooney, the owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers convinced team owners that fair competition should not only take place on the field but should also have a strong presence with respect to head coaches. Hence, the Fair Competition Resolution received unanimous support emerging as what is known as the Rooney Rule in 2003 (NewKirk 2019; and Duru 2011).

The Rooney Rule's origin, successes and failures have been well documented since inception. Hence, the goal is to discuss it differently. The origin of the Rooney Rule rests with the reality that minority men were being bypassed for head coaching jobs with such frequency as to establish a pattern of intentional discrimination. The success of the Rooney Rule is tied to: (1) activist athlete pioneers who had been fighting for equal opportunity for over 40 years prior to an equitable slate suggestion; (2) the pressure to avoid the optics of labor litigation featuring men who were being denied opportunities to demonstrate intelligence off the field, while simultaneously being disproportionately employed as physical performers on the field; and (3) decision makers who acted in ways to prove themselves centrally focused on increasing opportunities for minorities. The failure of the Rooney Rule is related to the turbulent reluctance to consistently embrace the Rooney rule

because: (1) owners felt imposed upon by lawyers and academics who were outside alien agents to the business of football within the context of family ownership; and (2) lack of severity, celerity, and certainty in legitimate sanctioning from the League and/or intra-ownership pressure to comply.

At worst the Rooney Rule has been rebuffed outright by owner's and decision makers and at best the Rooney Rule has failed to rise above suspicious speculation that it reeked of some type of affirmative action-based mandate or quota requirement that unfairly challenged owner's rights to determine their workforce. Although there was a 32-team consensus in adoption, it is easy to agree on something when there is no intention to follow through or no severe penalty for not upholding such an agreement. Adoption of the Rooney Rule can be likened unto a marriage proposal, with no absolute marriage date, other than concessions or extended courtship. Fritz Pollard was the first black to be recognized as a head coach although this recognition was with the American Professional Football Association (APFA) and not the professional football league that is now known as the NFL. Thus, in some circles, Art Shell was technically the second black head coach, who was hired by Al Davis to coach the Oakland Raiders. Contrarily, Art Shell can be recognized as the first black head coach of the modern-day National Football League (Proxmire 2008; and Lomax 1998). Stated another way, the NFL, founded in 1920 did not have a black head coach until 69 years later in 1989. It took close to 7 decades into the NFL's 102-year history for a first modern era black head coach. It took owner's and decision makers 69 of its 102 years to eventually do the right thing, which is throw one rock at the glass ceiling of head coaches, just to see how it looked and sounded.

Pre and post Rooney Rule coaching data is nothing more than numerical illusions. Meaning what appears to be success is failure and what appears to be failure is success. It really depends on perspective. Before the Rooney Rule 1990-2002 (covering 13 seasons), the range was a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3 minority coaches. During the post Rooney Rule 2003-2015 (covering 13 seasons), the range was a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 8 minority head coaches. The remaining post Rooney Rule seasons 2016-2021 (covering 6 seasons), the range remained at a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 8 minority head coaches. Essentially then, the first 13 seasons of the post Rooney Rule netted: (1) a higher minimum range starting at 3, which was the maximum number of minority head coach lead teams over the 13 pre-Rooney Rule seasons (1990-2002); and (2) a higher range between 3 and 8 minority head coaches that was sustained over 19 seasons (2003-2021). Therefore, it is logical to conclude that the Rooney Rule had an impact on increasing minority head coaching opportunities for over 19 years.

So why the speculation on Rooney Rule failures given there were: (1) two seasons (2003 and 2020) when there were 3 minority head coached teams, (2) two seasons (2013 and 2019) when there were 4 minority head coached teams, (3) three seasons (2004, 2014, and 2019) when there were 5 minority head coached teams, (4) five seasons (2005, 2007, 2009, 2016 and 2021) when there were 6 minority head coached teams, (5) three seasons (2006, 2008, and 2010) when there were 7 minority head coached teams; and (6) three

seasons (2011, 2017, and 2018) when there were 8 minority head coached teams? There are several answers, and all are related to the firing and hiring cycles that occur every season. Foremost, post Rooney Rule, there were head coaching vacancies where minority coaches were either passed over completely or hired at a disproportionately lower number than white coaches. Second and this is related to the first, there were instances where teams conducted pseudo interviews given, they already had a white candidate in mind. In these cases, teams were just being routine ritualists to the Rooney Rule. Third, post Rooney Rule there were situations where more minority coaches were fired than hired. Fourth, post Rooney Rule even at its highest success level at 8 minority head coaches, alternatively that meant 24 teams were coached by white males and for 19 seasons this would be the case. Stated another way at the highest count of 8 minority head coaches over 19 seasons, that amounts to 25% (8 out of 32 coaching jobs) of the minority head coaches for an NFL league that has 70% minorities on their teams' rosters. Without the full weight of sanctioning coming from the league, the requirements of the Rooney Rule could be ignored, and/or manipulated depending on ownership and decision makers (Rosenberg 2021; Stump 2020; Greenberg and Brenk 2018, Duru 2011, and Madden and Ruther 2010).

In 2009 the Rooney Rule was expanded to include general managers (NewKirk 2019). Leading up to the Rooney Rule there were at least 2 general managers. Post Rooney Rule Expansion that number has hovered around 5, climbed to 7 in 2016, dropped to 1 in 2019 and now stands at 3 when the 2021 seasons gets underway. With 32 general managing opportunities the single digit representation of minority general managers suggests that the Rooney Rule is a work in progress (Rosenberg 2021; Stump 2020; and Greenberg and Brenk 2018).

The National Football League's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Reports

In 2013, the NFL commissioned its own study to assess racial variance in coaching opportunities, occupational upward and downward mobility, and trends in coaching tenure. Dr. Keith Harrison and Scott Bukstein from the University of Central Florida produced 9 volumes of research from 2013 to 2021. Their research was primarily based on NFL datasets. Harrison and Bukstein's research concluded: (1) social capital, racial relatability, and social networking significantly impacts coaching prospect; (2) coaching candidacy is contingent upon decision makers who are themselves looking for key intangible qualities that speak to trustworthiness, competence, leadership style and ability to be persuasive within a diverse environment; (3) decision making within organizations are influenced by implicit bias or some degree of adverse perceptions regarding minority candidates; (4) coaching mobility, is negatively impacted by racial stacking, reshuffling, and a bottle neck pipeline, which is problematic because it covers up opportunities to take on coaching leadership roles and ages out otherwise talented coaches; and (5) recycling head and positional coaches is not beneficial to minority and/or first time head coaches.

Harrison and Bukstein's 9 volume reports produced three solid recommendations for future research that this research report has adopted: (1) future research should explore

hiring practices from a quantitative and qualitative perspective; (2) future research should uncover the unique nuances of hiring decisions using a qualitative approach; and (3) future research should be used as a basis to promote organizational hiring decision transparency through the application of a systemic scoring system (Harrison and Bukstein 2013-2020).

Part 1: Sociological Research Report Synopsis

Recall that sociology is a social science that examines human agency, culture, choice, behavioral outcomes, and interaction patterns. In attempting to understand, forecast and even predict the likelihood of a phenomenon occurring, the best indicator is significantly related to what has transpired in the past. I am a sociologist, and the NFL is the unit of analysis for this report. To summarize this report has provided a narrative of the NFL as a League and 32 team organization that has proven to be a combination of good, bad, and ugly with respect to race in the NFL. Certainly, the NFL being 102 years in operation has amassed a racial legacy that has had sustained pockets of turbulence, and measured successes that were consistently trespassed upon resulting in stagnant diversity, equity, and inclusion results. The front end of this report is a tough pill to swallow and perhaps some will dismiss it outright as pure speculation, sensationalized racial polarization, illogical inferencing and lacking generalizability and validity. My sociological lens of the NFL has not stepped outside of any of the sources that were used to examine the NFL, dating back to 1920. Moreover, this research report reflects the NFL's collective record of behavior. Certainly, this report has not exhausted every avenue and may have missed some pivotal incidences; however, nothing thus far can call into question the logical progression of presentation that is derived from a literature review of the NFL.

A good predictor of a phenomenon is best captured by its history. That part is completed. Now comes, Part 2, the opportunity to examine interviews from individuals who have some level of experience and tenure with the NFL. The second half of this report examines interviews from journalists, civil rights lawyers, athletic directors, professional head coaches, general managers, and team owners. An overview of the data permits one preliminary statement. Diversity, equity, and inclusion as it pertains to hiring head coaches is contingent upon not having enough decisive intentional minded decision makers (perhaps in the mold of Tampa Bay Buccaneers owner Bryan Glazer, and coaches the likes of Bruce Arians and Andy Reid), coupled with a disproportionately higher number of owners who seem to be influenced by cultural definitions, and cultural image making perspectives on humanity with respect to racial deservedness, power dynamics, racial indifference, dismissiveness, and tolerance for inter-racial occupational inequality.

PART 2: DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

Sociologists are interested in understanding social phenomenon. From that interest a research statement is constructed to define the issue and/or the problem to be explored. For purposes of this research, the social phenomenon is the business of hiring minority head coaches. The problem to be explored is the NFL's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. The literature review of the NFL's 102 season history from Part 1 of this research project makes it logical to conclude that the NFL's efforts at numerical diversity at the head coach position has been problematic regardless of the NFL's best and worst attempts to reconcile the consistently disproportionately lower number of minority head coaches spanning over the NFL's 102 seasons. Stated another way, the Rooney Rule being the NFL's marquee hiring consideration policy has delivered per season at worst 3 minority head coaches and at best 8 minority head coaches since 2003. This means that at no time post Rooney Rule has minority head coaches come close to 12 out of 32 teams, which is the number the great Bill Walsh's envisioned. Bill Walsh's pedigree stems from Paul Brown and then he in turn developed an impressive generational minority head coach tree. These 10 minority head coaches over 6 generations include Dennis Green, Ray Rhodes, Tony Dungy, Leslie Frazier, Lovie Smith, Herm Edwards, Mike Tomlin, Marvin Lewis, Jim Caldwell, and Romeo Crennel. At worst all of them have experienced being in a Super Bowl as a player or a coach and at best seven have Super Bowl Rings as head coach, coordinator, assistant, or positional coaches. At no time has minority head coaches been consistent with minority athlete representation (that has climbed from 16% to 70%) on NFL rosters since 1946, nor even at its highest number of minority head coaches, 8 out of 32 (25%) for the 2017 and 2018 seasons come close to 50% of minority head coaches.

The book end comments made by Tex Schramm and John Wooten continue to drive this report. Whereas Tex Schramm stated, *"when I'm hiring, I know who I want"* and John Wooten rebutted *"of course but we're not arguing whether you know who you want or not, we're arguing whether you got the best guy"* (Duru 2011:56). It logically follows that there is something unique about what an owner, team president, general manager, executive or decision maker wants that has at times contradicted hiring the best person for the job. This report attempts to operationalize, numerically ground, or quantify what is meant by decision makers "knowing what they want" in a head coach by examining indicators of "uniqueness." Uniqueness is assumed to be significantly related to "want." Stated another way, when decision makers suggest they know what they "want" then they are in effect saying a coach is somehow unique to them. What are the criteria for meeting a decision maker's "want" and/or what makes a coach unique enough to satisfy a decision maker's "want?" To be clear then, the research questions are: (1) does head coach criteria exist and (2) how unique is a head coach criteria? The problem that has been created is there is an obvious gap, (inequality) in decision maker's preferences (wants) and hiring the best coach as captured by statements made by Schramm and Wooten. Hence, the NFL's hiring practices has been problematic in terms of inequality and this report aims to address the gap or inequality in hiring by constructing a qualitative assessment instrument.

This qualitative assessment instrument will be combined with a quantitative algorithm to provide a mixed methods strong measure that can be used to assist decision makers during their hiring deliberations.

Sociologists immerse themselves in data, are objectively consumed by it, and allow the data to reveal the storyline. There is usually something in the data that emerges to warrant attention. For this study, the data indicated that decision maker's firing and/or not hiring minority head coaches has had a negative impact on those that were fired, and/or passed over for a head coach position. Going into this project, it was a cut and dry examination of the chasm that exists between decision maker's wants and them not consistently hiring the best person. Meritocracy as a beacon of NFL practices has suffered and has led to minority coaches reluctantly resigning themselves to an arbitrary, subjective, discretionary decision maker's preference over merit. In other words, at the end of the day minority coaches are losing out on opportunities because of what appears to be some inter-racial notion of image that has become justified as a reason to hire over merit. This begs the question that minority participants in this research not only generated but also answered. What damage has been done to minority coaches? The answer is submission and diminishing hope that a return on their lifelong investment securing their merit has been rendered insignificant to decision maker's image of a head coach. Decision makers need to know the emotional turbulence that they have created whenever they hire outside of merit. Yet another question as it relates to emotional turbulence is, do decision maker's care? It's been 102 seasons and if actions speak louder than words, then the answer seems obvious. Removing that 102 season layer permits optimism if the NFL and its teams invest, embrace, and evolve into a post-racial entity. Then it becomes a safe assumption that there is potential for team owners, team presidents, and general managers to intimately interact in diverse social networks where rapport can be established. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are on the table every hiring cycle, which means the opportunities to reflect on preferences and merit is routinely at the forefront.

METHODS

The sample size at (N=32) was constructed from a two-pronged approach. A qualitative approach, inclusive of interviews (e.g., in person, zoom, and telephone) and direct responses to emails produced 18 participants (56% of the sample size). Secondary data collection inclusive of documentaries, videos, journal articles, books and book chapters, and journalist insider research article discovery products produced 14 contributors (44% of the sample size). Thus, the two-pronged approach of qualitative, and secondary data collection netted a sample size for this study that allowed for variance in responses, validity, and generalizability. The theme for qualitative and secondary data collection was to concentrate on people who have intimate knowledge and tenure with football in general and specifically, the NFL. A thorough sociological analysis of the NFL's efforts at diversity, equity, and inclusion warrants exploration and examination.

Part 1 of this report completed exploration of the NFL's employment practices with respect to minority athletes, and head coaches. The findings from Part 1 leads to the conclusion that the NFL and its teams were: (1) consumed by adverse inter-racial issues that effected discretionary, and impartial personnel decisions and (2) there were signs that the NFL as a league of teams had the potential to deliver racial fairness and equity. Part 2 of this report is the examination component. It is important to be repetitive to maintain focus. This section attempts to operationalize what Tex Schramm stated, *"when I'm hiring, I know who I want"* and approach a quantifiable solution to John Wooten rebuttal *"of course but we're not arguing whether you know who you want or not, we're arguing whether you got the best guy"* (Duru 2011:56). A qualitative approach is the best method to gauge the experiences of a tenured population that understands the nuances of hiring head coaches.

Qualitative research is an organized method of describing people's experiences and internal feelings. It can be said that qualitative research provides a thorough and deep overview of a phenomenon through data collection and presents a rich description using a flexible method of research. In this method, qualitative information, which is gathered in the form of non-numerical data, is presented. Sampling is the process of choosing a part of the population to represent the whole. If the researcher considers a part of the population as a representation of the whole. The analysis will be more comprehensive (Naderifar, Goli, and Ghaljaie 2017:1).

Mr. John Wooten was instrumental in encouraging an otherwise exclusive and hard to reach group of people to participate in this study. It is accurate to state that Mr. John Wooten was the primary domino that resulted in 10 out of the 12 people he personally contacted to participate in this study (83% response rate). An argument can be made that a domino style of recruiting detracts from variance and generalizability in findings. However, this caveat was overcome by open ended questions and interviews that lasted between 30 minutes to an hour and sometimes over an hour. Open ended questions and interview length allowed time for participants to individually express their opinions about criteria for hiring head coaches. The domino style is also known as "snowball sampling."

Snowball sampling is a convenience sampling method. This method is applied when it is difficult to access subjects with the target characteristics. In this method, the existing study subjects recruit future subjects among their acquaintances. Sampling continues until data saturation...The snowball method not only takes little time but also provides the researcher with the opportunity to communicate better with the samples, as they are acquaintances of the first sample (Naderifar, Goli, and Ghaljaie 2017:1).

The qualitative component where participants were interviewed via zoom or telephone or responded to an email consisted of questions concerning head coach criteria, uniqueness of cultural identity, and personal experiences as a tenured coach, general manager, executive, and athletic director at the college level. Lawyers with intimate knowledge of the origins of the Rooney Rule and journalists that have covered the NFL for decades were also interviewed. The secondary data component was instrumental in gathering data from team owners, team presidents, general managers, head coaches, and coordinators. Consolidating the qualitative approach and the secondary data gathering method produced 32 contributors: (1) four team owners 13%; (2) two team president 6%;

(3) one executive of team operations 3%; (4) three general managers 9%; (5) ten coaches 31%; (6) three coordinators 9%; (7) four athletic directors 13%; (8) three journalists 9%; and (9) two lawyers 6%.

The qualitative assessment tool was developed based on responses to the open-ended questions and observations from secondary data sources. Nominal labels were assigned as indicators of criteria for a head coach, cultural identity, and evidence of impartiality, inequity, and discretionary decision-making outcomes. Additionally, psychological processes operating in the minds of individuals who were impacted by perceived racialized choices were also categorized. Nominal labels were based on established themes or perceptions which resulted from the frequency of times a word was mentioned, duration or concept elaboration, and/or intensity of association, which rises above researcher arbitrary nominal assignment. Stated another way, nominal labels were constructed based on a word audit of conversations that took place between interviewer and interviewee, open ended responses to emails and observed responses offered during documentaries and videos. Additionally, nominal categories were derived from memoirs, journal and magazine articles, and book chapters.

Results: Journalist's Perceptions Concerning Coach Criteria and More

Journalists are public service agents who endeavor to enlighten the public. Journalists hold themselves accountable for accuracy throughout the life cycle of a news report. Journalists have a healthy respect for protocol steps that understand facts as critically aligned with information that can be verified. This report benefited from 30 minute to 1-hour zoom interviews from three top tier journalists who have decades of tenure covering the NFL. Their voices are important because although they focus on the NFL, they too have an allegiance to the public more than the NFL. Clarence Hill, Jr. has been a critical information disseminator as a Senior Sport's writer for the Fort Worth Star Telegram. He has covered the Dallas Cowboys for over two decades and has authored the book, *A Game for Life: Troy Aikman A Pro Football Hall of Fame Biography* (2019). Jarrett Bell is an NFL columnist covering professional football for 40 years, 28 of those years with USA Today. Jarrett Bell has been a consistent contributor for ESPN between 2013-2017 and was a featured panelist for SportsCenter's NFL Insiders and contributor on the NFL network. Jarrett Bell is also a Pro Football Hall of Fame selector. Jim Trotter is a NFL.com senior columnist and is known for producing research intensive specialist articles. Jim Trotter has contributed to the NFL network and *Sport's Illustrated*. Jim Trotter is known for his story telling approach and has candidly tackled issues concerning the legacy of race media coverage and the impact of racial representation in the NFL and journalism. Jim Trotter has authored a book *Junior Seau: The Life and Death of a Football Icon* (2016) and is co-authoring a book with potential professional football hall of famer, Larry Fitzgerald. Additionally, Jim Trotter has also served as president of Pro Football Writers of America and is a hall of fame selector.

Mr. Clarence Hill, Jr., provided context for his responses to coach criteria. For Mr. Hill, Jr., NFL team owners are 32 organizations operating as a family producing several issues at

play with respect to coach hires: (1) the hiring process is unique to a team's market; (2) subject to perceived coach readiness, which is influenced by owners willingness to see potential, go out on a limb, or afford the benefit of the doubt for white coaches more than black coaches; (3) owners are driven by their egos, and prefer a coach that can be controlled and/or a coach that will allow degrees of freedom for owners to move within the organization with respect to player personnel, and executive-to-player access; and (4) owner-to-coach comfort and/or fitness and trustworthiness amongst team owner family members. Mr. Hill Jr. also opined that the Rooney Rule is a good effort at attempting to approach some degree of meritocracy, but Mr. Hill Jr. thinks that the owners will hire who they want. Hence, for Mr. Hill Jr., the yester-year Jimmy Raye II and Sherm Lewis of the NFL will continue to have some modern-day reminiscent version in the form of an Eric Bieniemy.

Mr. Hill Jr.: *We can do all the research we want and do the statistics but at the end of the day this is a one-to-one ownership issue in hiring people that look like them... this is really about racism and a glass ceiling and owners hiring people who look like them. They come up with the image of what they want as their coaches. Minority coaches get shut out no matter how long they have been in the league.*

According to Mr. Hill Jr. , a diversity, equity, and inclusion hiring crisis with respect to disproportionate representation of minority head coaches, can be averted because team owners can continue to hire who they want in the absence of professional athletes converting their numerical representation to a powerful unified influential voice demanding more minority hires. For Mr. Hill Jr., performance-based hiring for minority coaches will be nullified by owner's criteria: (1) image (e.g., skin tone comfort in white skin as opposed to black); (2) social appraisal (e.g., coach's appearance); (3) notoriety (e.g. who the fan base will socially welcome and support); and (4) marketability (e.g., who the fan base will financially support via ticket purchases)?

Mr. Jarrett Bell seemed to offer a different take on research, and data collection. For him, the worst part is having to routinely cycle through news coverage about an overabundance of NFL caliber black head coaches who consistently get by-passed or overlooked during hiring cycles. Alternatively, at best witnessing a couple of black coaches get the opportunity to become a head coach and then have that tenure be short lived or stagnate the process of the following hiring cycle is frustrating as a black man and a black journalist. Mr. Bell contends that humanitarianism, the human element of subjective feelings not only guides coach hires but also adversely impacts the self-efficacy of minority coaches that continue to be passed over for less comparable white coaches or coaches who have retread survivability in the NFL. Mr. Bell implied that the institution of journalism may have some inherent biases (e.g., journalists who prefer not to disrupt a cozy relationship with their sources for fear of being cut off) that prohibit detailed research-intensive enterprise publications (e.g., the kind of journalism that delves into the impact of employment-based decisions). Additionally, Mr. Bell was adamant that the inter-racial coverage and perhaps concern about societal racial issues, and the racial divide amongst head coaches is far less a concern for white journalists as it is for black journalists. Those white journalists that do engage in race related stories, approach it more as anecdotal novelty work. Ironically, white

voices or narratives about racial issues could indeed carry more weight than black voices or narratives about the impact of race on equity and inclusion. Mr. Bell further laments that the journalist presentation on the Rooney Rule has been research intensive and race and labor issue exhaustive (more on an enterprise level) than coverage on the distinction between the NFL as a league and the NFL as an organization of 32 separate teams.

Mr. Bell: *The more information, the more data that are there are going to confirm what we know already. That's really the weird thing about it. You can try to slice it and come after this issue from so many different angles, and it will lead to the same place. Like give these people opportunities. There is always something to be said in terms of you know if two candidates either the same color or of a different race are close and then there is the human element of it and that is really where all of this stuff comes up. So how do you measure the human element?*

After moments of contemplation, Mr. Bell suggests that the human element is linked to owner's ability to consider hiring coaches independent of social and political statements. Mr. Bell seems to be suggesting that humanitarianism and individualism are interchangeable components of the unique hiring process. Mr. Bell contends that the criteria for coach should concern: (1) authentic presentations of self; (2) full disclosures that are embedded in the truth; (3) evidence of respect for decision makers, being accountable and accessible in times of adversity; and (4) uniqueness is equivalent to perception of a "feel good" or comfortable hire. Although Mr. Bell cautioned that owners are probably not as caught up in the disproportionate racial divide with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion (particularly long-time team owners), he did speculate on how changes in team ownership in the 1990's increased diversity given new team owners appeared to operate independently from good ole boy networks or aged cultural standards that perpetuate racial intolerance or perceived threats to ownership power dynamics. Mr. Bell contends that a winning proposition is merit based and should be a race neutral consideration. Whatever the racial coach landscape looks likes after consideration of a winning proposition-based humanitarianism, individualism, character assessments and mutual comfort is a level of acceptable fairness.

Mr. Jim Trotter contends that the NFL has had a complicated relationship with race and that like most American institutions of employment, education, social networking, and cultural lifestyle narrative construction (relative to print, electronic and media driven journalism), the problem is significantly related to the absence of minorities in defined positions of power. During the zoom interview, Mr. Trotter provided a data driven comparative assessment of the history of the NFL, with respect to its collective record on diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is noted that Mr. Trotter was careful to not cast dispersions about team owners and decision makers being racist. Instead, he consistently trumpeted several examples of hiring decisions that were less about performance-based outcomes and more about "a difference," which makes it completely logical to abandoned perceptions that the NFL is a meritocracy. Mr. Trotter discussed the cyclical nature of the racial divide in hiring practices by offering Eric Bieniemy as the modern day Sherm Lewis indicative of the repetitive epitome of a black head coach by-pass. Mr. Trotter's offering the hiring outcomes comparing Eric Bieniemy, Doug Pederson, and Matt Nagy was probably rhetorical. According

to Mr. Trotter, team owner's sense of morality is unaffected by appeals to a racially balanced mindset as owners have not had to share in the racial marginalization, racial alienation, suppression, opportunity denial, value judgment appraisals, and racial image distancing as it pertains to being presented as the antithesis of whiteness.

Jim Trotter: *I'm saying this from a point of studying history of the NFL. If you are trying to reach these owners on a moral level, you are not going to do it. Because it's never been done and that's not a me thing, its history saying it. As I said until Cyrus Mehri and the late Johnnie Cochran threatened to sue the NFL over discriminatory hiring practices as it relates to head coaches there was no movement towards diversity and inclusion at the head coach level in the NFL. It wasn't until that threat of the lawsuit that the Rooney Rule was implemented, and its undergone different changes since then but that is where that came from. So, what is history saying to us and again this is not me this is history. History is saying that the only way you get these men and women to move is either through the threat of litigation or actual litigation or somehow impacting their bottom line through their revenues. They only speak two languages and that's litigation and revenue. Those two things. If you are appealing to them on a moral ground, it's simply not going to happen. And that's history saying that to us it's not me saying it.... Let me say this to you. The reality to me is when it comes to diversity and inclusion you have to be intentional about it because when we are talking about white men and women in power. They live in a different world than we live in and that is just the reality of it. So, the things that are important to us and that matter to us does not impact their daily lives. And that is why I am saying if you are trying to appeal to them on a moral ground history has shown us that is not going to work. I'm not sitting here saying to a man and woman that these are racist individuals who simply don't like black people and won't hire black people. They have implicit biases that prevent them from seeing some of the things that we see, or we go through.... Sometimes I don't think that they understand or are willing to accept that the game is played by different rules and that we see things differently and things impact us differently, that they simply aren't willing to acknowledge. I know some of these owners personally. I know they are not racist, but I also know that what is going on does not impact them in the same way that it impacts me or you or another person of color and that is just the reality.*

Mr. Trotter continued to lament how his career has given him access to owners and decision makers who candidly disclosed that race related hiring decisions are prisoner to perceptions of comfort, which is bolstered when the candidate is of the same race and comes from similar backgrounds as the owners and decision makers. Upon close inspection, an objective standard of characteristics is absent prior to hiring decisions, which makes it even harder to navigate implicit bias or decisions based on a natural gravitation to perceived appearance, cultural, and lifestyle similarities. Mr. Trotter suggested the development of written categorical characteristics where owners can objectively examine the number of boxes a potential head coach candidate fulfilled during an interview process. Mr. Trotter rebuffed the concept of coach pipelines, and the value of having coordinator experiences for two reasons. First, Mr. Trotter contends that pipeline conversation is nothing more than an obstacle prop that is positioned to be a proverbial "wait your turn" that could be nothing more than coach stacking or a line that white coaches are not subjected to in consideration for hiring. Second, Mr. Trotter suggested that there is frustration given the bar for qualifications is elusive or swings like an octagon pendulum resulting in a never ending one sided racial pursuit where only black coaches must give chase. Still Mr. Trotter offered head

coach criteria that is best captured by the terms “relatable humanity”: (1) ability to lead men; (2) ability to connect and/or establish relationship rapport; (3) ability to communicate in order to be an effective teacher; and (4) ability to empathize.

Mr. Trotter did not shy away from the notion that owners can afford to be nonchalant about racial equity and inclusion because they understand that the NFL is a brand of sport that has a loyal fan base no matter the racial struggle that is happening from within. For the most part the public persona (in terms of fan financial support and fan identification with their respective favorite teams) of the NFL is that it is a sport and is not nor does it have to be an equitable employment industry. Stated another way, no matter the racial disparities, in coach, executives, decision makers and/or owners, kickoff will proceed as it has for 102 seasons and fan support will be overwhelmingly supportive. The new component that Mr. Trotter introduced above and beyond the frustration that Mr. Clarence Hill Jr. and Mr. Jarrett Bell referenced is a more detailed adverse impact on black coach’s self-efficacy to a point where black coaches feel they must continue to somehow improve upon an already highly employable skill set.

Mr. Trotter: *Look I am not impacted by this, when you talk to these men and they are honest with you. And you hear the frustration, the anger, the disappointment, and I think worse the sense of hopelessness in their voice. If you are not impacted by that, if you are not affected by that then man you just ain’t got a heart. Believe me I don’t want to keep talking about this stuff, but I keep saying if I don’t who will? Because I know my white media brethren are not going to continue talking about this. And whether it gets me fired at some point, which it might. I will be cool with that because you know what? I have been true to my conscience. And somebody has to speak up for these men because they can’t do it themselves for fear that they may get the same Colin Kaepernick treatment.*

Mr. Trotter stated that after talking to black men who have suffered being passed over for head coach opportunities, there is a sense of pain, anger, frustration, disappointment, and sense of hopelessness. Moreover, the consistent, unrelenting racial burden has left Mr. Trotter fighting against feeling “beaten down.” Still, Mr. Trotter forges on in the fight to speak for those black coaches who operate out of a sense of concern for the consequences of being maligned or even fired. He too, has an awareness that he could be fired for his persistence in detailing the inequity and racial disproportionality in the NFL as a league and organization of 32 teams, NFL media and sports’ news desks.

Results: Lawyer’s Perception About the Rooney Rule, Coach Criteria and More

Mr. Cyrus Mehri and Mr. Jeremi Duru are two exceptional legal minds specializing in seeking justice in an ever evolving economic, employment, business, social and cultural landscape. Mr. Cyrus Mehri certainly understands that litigation is required to effectuate change with respect to institutions that have long-standing discriminatory practices that function to block or restrict opportunities for social mobility. Mr. Cyrus Mehri has become an iconic challenge through litigation against intentional preoccupations vested in racial intolerance. Mr. Cyrus Mehri successfully litigated against Texaco and Coca-Cola, who had a “wall of legal counsel.” Mr. Mehri was undaunted and secured legal victories via monetary

damages in the millions in 1997 and 2001, respectively. Certainly, his cache along with Johnnie Cochran, another iconic attorney would command the NFL's attention with respect to the threat of litigation against what was long-standing evidence of labor inequity, and racial disparities in a predominantly minority driven "athletic" landscape ruled by a non-minority elite class of business owners, executives, general managers, and head coaches.

Mr. Jeremi Duru is a solid legal mind in areas of sport law, civil procedure, and discriminatory employment practices. Mr. Jeremi Duru is a premier sports' law authority to say the least and has authored *Advancing the Ball: Race, Reformation, and the Quest for Equal Coach Opportunity in the NFL*. This book offered an exceptionally detailed account of the evolving nature and impact of race on opportunity affordances in the NFL. According to Mr. Jeremi Duru, Tony Dungy's termination was a significant prompt to push the NFL on its unfair labor practices.

Mr. Duru: *To effectuate change, Mehri knew, he had to convincingly prove even to skeptics, that the competition for NFL head coach positions was fundamentally unfair and that African American coaches were judged against more exacting standards than their white colleagues. Mehri believed that the trend of head coach hirings and firings throughout the League over the preceding several years supported his hypothesis, but he knew anecdotes could propel his arguments only so far. Cynics would trot out counteranecdotes and attribute seeming disparities to coincidence (Duru 2011:20).*

The purpose of the results in this section is to present findings related to coach criteria from Mehri and Duru's zoom interviews and not rehash the nuances of the Rooney Rule, which was covered in Part 1 of this report. For recall purposes, a snapshot of the Rooney Rule offered owners the opportunity to "clarify the meaning of what they want in a coach" by advancing the idea that merit-based opportunities should be equally accessible and not default to racial differences. The ultimate philosophical challenge or push back against the Rooney Rule was team owners feeling the rule was equivalent to a civil rights mandate attempting to enforce a quota, legislate their hearts or pre-determine their freedom of choice as a business owner (New Kirk 2019 and Duru 2011).

Mr. Mehri: *Bill Bidwill turned out to be a pretty good champion (for the cause of a level playing field) ...The Bidwills are one of the more progressive group of owners...The question now is are we going to get it right going forward? There are some glimmers of hope. There are chunks of people that are in power who are now humbled now by the issue of race...Who are trying to do things... are companies and leaders going to do something meaningful or are they just going to be going through the motions? Literally what is going wrong right now if you look at the owners. The owners are making a decision based on who makes sense to them who they can relate to. They should be thinking who is it that the locker room can relate to and that should give certain guys an edge.*

Mr. Mehri contends that despite minority coaches coming from an experienced coach pipeline, and have been prepped and prepared for interviews, the frustration rests with checking all the criteria for a head coach only to be passed over by what seems to be irrational choices from owners and decision makers. Thus, for Mr. Mehri it is the owners that must be self-reflective given the owner's wall is a tough wall to break through because it would require owners admitting that they are susceptible to in group favoritism, decisions

based on colorism and hiring coaches that have been less prepared to handle the duties of a head coach. Mr. Mehri's criteria for a head coach is linked to leadership, which is indicated by: (1) can a coach get the most out of what he has or can he get the most out of people that make them effective; (2) can he inspire an entire locker room; (3) coach-to-athlete relatability and/or having a strong human side of things, possessing a high level of social and emotional intelligence; (4) organizational skills or ability to map out and/or plan; (5) be able to effectively evaluate other coaches; and (6) strong communicator within the locker room and to the community at large. For Mr. Mehri, these criteria could serve as a counter to racial discrimination or perceived customer bias where owners imply that they are not racially prejudiced, but their customers are biased.

Mr. Jeremi Duru considers himself an "activist academic," which means, construct a work product that thoroughly examines a problem, and then work towards a solution. An activist academic is a methodical problem solver and should engage in work that has recommendations that impact policy. According to Mr. Duru, the Rooney Rule is a modest request, simply asking teams to interview a minority without the mandate of having to hire a minority candidate. Still, Mr. Duru implied that 5 to 6 teams are progressive and invested in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Another 5 to 6 teams would prefer not to hire a minority coach and/or would prefer to avoid the process entirely. The rest of the teams can be convinced that the Rooney Rule has value and is a winning proposition when a minority coach is selected from a balanced objective team process and helps the team be successful.

Mr. Duru: *I believe that at the end of the day you need to be able to lead a group of men. All of whom in order to have gotten to where they are will be strong willed and often times alpha men. Alpha males, right and so you can have coordinators is a quote, unquote genius but you have to have someone who can lead and that's Dan Rooney's principle criteria.*

Mr. Duru opined that the Rooney's are intentional in their pursuit of fairness and are guided by the primary principle of leadership. Mr. Duru offered that Dan Rooney was guided by: (1) hiring someone that players would follow; and (2) inspires confidence in a vision that aligns with the team's vision for success.

Taken together Mr. Mehri and Mr. Duru focused on leadership as the primary criteria for coach consideration. Both offered that there are pockets of potential where diversity, equity and inclusion can be intentionally pursued on a consistent basis given decision makers are progressing towards some level of racial awareness and may operate independently of long-standing prejudiced preferences that a disproportionately higher number of NFL organizations continue to be welded.

Results: Athletic Director's Perceptions about Coach Criteria

The NFL's coach pipeline is often used to imply there is an organized process of development that is necessary to become a professional head coach. In other words, there is a pipeline or an incubation period where potential head coaches are being mentored, exposed to, and provided valuable experiences to develop a head coach skill set. Coaches become part of a pipeline by virtue of a coaching tree or working under the tutelage of more experienced coaches. Hence the pipeline can be as entry level as someone entering a mentoring program, an assistant to a positional coach, a scout, positional coach, coordinator and or an assistant head coach. The coaching tree is presented as an investment in a tenure process where upward mobility is contingent upon acquiring skills and positive performance. In short, the coach pipeline is assembled to produce a professional head coach. Another vessel to the professional coach pipeline is through college football. The college football coach pipeline is the feeder system to the professional coach pipeline. Hence, the college football coach pipeline runs parallel in many ways to the professional pipeline, so the college football pipeline's goal is to produce a professional level talent. For this reason, it logically follows that athletic director's criteria for a head coach hire would be beneficial to know. Four athletic directors participated via zoom call for this study: (1) Mr. Ray Anderson, Athletic Director at Arizona State University; (2) Mrs. Etienne Thomas, Athletic Director at Winston Salem State University; (3) Mr. Terry Tumey, Athletic Director at Fresno State; and (4) Mr. Markus Jennings, Assistant Athletic Director at Sacramento State.

Mr. Ray Anderson's responses likely combined his current position as an athletic director with his NFL experiences. Mr. Anderson's tenure includes being a NFL's executive vice president for football operations, and a professional sport's agent for primarily African American coaches. Mr. Anderson also represented white coaches. Additionally, Mr. Anderson also was an agent for MLB (major league baseball) players. Mr. Anderson was also appointed by Commissioner Tagliabue who thought Mr. Anderson was one of the few progressive minded team executives. Hence Mr. Anderson who was then a club executive for the Atlanta Falcons was appointed to a committee to examine diversity in the NFL.

Mr. Anderson: *By progressive I think that Tagliabue was referring that I was very deliberate, and I was very intentional in wanting to go out and represent African American head coaches, not just as an agent but as a lawyer and an advocate that would not just take the traditional route. I think what he meant by progressive is that I was also very vocal. I made no bones about the fact that we thought that the system was unfair, it was not diverse, it was not open, it was not ready on a consistent basis to make opportunities equal across the board for meritorious African American head coaches in particular. So, I went about it as a Harvard educated lawyer who had been an agent for a number of years...Paul Tagliabue and others called me progressive because I had Denny Green, Tony Dungy, Tyrone Willingham, Marvin Lewis, Willie Shaw, and Ray Sherman. I made no qualms that when opportunities became available that if my clients were not in the mix legitimately then it is because the good ole boy network was trying to continue itself in the NFL. So, working with John Wooten and others I was able to get their attention.*

Mr. Anderson revealed that a head coach criteria is contingent upon the philosophical dynamics of a “good ole boy” network. Mr. Anderson states that the “good ole boy” network adequately defines a league of owners who act along a racially homogeneous dynamic whereby the image of a head coach begins with appearance. More specifically, the best head coach candidate under a “good ole boy” network is one that looks like the owners. Mr. Anderson identifies owner’s head coaching decisions as traditionally welded to racial dominance. Meaning that a major positive criterion for a head coach is the element of trustworthiness. Team owners are more likely to concede trustworthiness based on a racial appearance that favors being white, more than minority. In those instances where a minority candidate has become a finalist, he has a limited amount of time before team owners to garner their trust, which is a proxy for being either race neutral or not a racial threat. According to Mr. Anderson it boils down to impression management. Mr. Anderson contends that minority coaches need to be prepped on impression management or how to present themselves as clean cut, (inclusive of being neatly groomed and in some cases having no facial hair and a neatly managed hairstyle), articulate, less abrasive, and especially someone who contradicts negative racial stereotypes linked to blacks as being aggressive, stubborn, and unable to command a group of men from a leadership position. Stated another way, Mr. Anderson made it clear that criteria for a head coach candidate is the ability to convince team owners that skin tone differences are not a proxy for incompetence or an impediment on an ability to produce a winning football program. Mr. Anderson shared his head coach criteria as linked to those coaches he was an agent and advocate for when he offered that a head coach candidate: (1) must be competent in terms of knowledge of the game and how it is played; (2) must have confidence in ability to teach the strategy of football; (3) must be able to inspire confidence in other coaches and players and more importantly win the confidence of team owners; (4) must be able to lead a team of diverse men with diverse personalities; and (5) motivate players to perform at the highest of their abilities.

One caveat of this study is that it presents results based on a sample size of 32 of, which are mostly minority males 21 (66%), and 8 (25%) non-minority males, 1 non-minority female (3%), and 2 (6%) minority females (Asian and African American). It is clear this report is dominated by minority males. There was an effort to recruit African American women and this study benefited from Mrs. Etienne Thomas, an Athletic Director at Winston Salem State University, a historically black university that is in the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA). Mrs. Thomas’ Juris Doctorate discipline often bubbled to the surface as she made matter of fact statements about a potential head coach candidate needing to have a concern and willingness to follow NCAA rules and run a football program that functions within academic compliance for the benefit of student-athletes.

Mrs. Etienne Thomas discussed the importance of social networks and how informal interactions build rapport for opportunities that may become available down the line. Informal social networks, communities of associates, contacts, and/or friends that can be likened to knowledge communities amongst African Americans can function as hidden societies allowing for opportunities to learn skills, showcase ability, characteristics and

efficacy that are pivotal towards successful job transitions, upward mobility and effective diversity, equity, and inclusion. These African American informal networks contribute to not only rapport building but also serves as a forecast relative to job positional comfort, and confidence in mutual support to make sure there are successful blueprints in place to achieve desired missions. In other words, professional social networks amongst African Americans are a preparatory pipeline of sorts. As a decision maker charged with the duty of hiring a head coach to turn a losing football program into a more respectable competitive program, Mrs. Thomas offered that she prioritizes coaches who are the “right fit.” Mrs. Thomas also stated that coaches who have NFL aspirations are putting in the work to position themselves to coach on the professional level, so they are taking on college coach positions, inheriting sometimes adverse conditions in terms of relationships with boosters, number of scholarship players, and program financial hardships.

Mrs. Thomas: *What I was looking for, again looking for that right fit. I needed someone who would come in and nurture the young men. My intention (when referring to her Kentucky State hire) was not to find a black coach, my commitment to these young men was to find someone who could see them to being the men that they needed to be. Most of them black and brown men. I was not interested in somebody who was going to win a bunch of championships and not see them and them be commodities...I wanted a champion; I needed that person that knew how to win. They might not have won the national title, but they knew how to win, and they could teach that and embody that. I needed a team player somebody that I could say, look I am going to see a donor and I need you to come with me. Someone who wanted to be in a partnership, someone who would follow the rules. If they were not interested in NCAA rules, then I was not interested in them. Someone who was a family person, didn't have to be married but was a family person. Half of my team had children, but they didn't know what to do with the children, they just had them. And they were trying to find that balance, so someone that could help them do that. Someone who could grow a great team of a coaches who could support them and their vision...Bring it full circle to make sure our students left with degrees and left with championships.... At the end of the day, an athletic director, a general manager, an owner is looking for a CEO of their program. For me I want someone that can see an entire program and makes moves.*

Mrs. Thomas clarified the meaning of “culture of care.” Meaning her head coach criteria was welded to a coach’s ability to nurture and guide young black and brown college athletes. Hence, for Mrs. Thomas her criteria was presented as: (1) body of work that demonstrates a blueprint for winning games; (2) team and university fitness with respect to academic and NCAA rules’ compliance; (3) someone who can help young athletes process and achieve responsible on and off the field actions; (4) disciplinary when necessary; (5) someone who could inspire vision and buy into the identity of a team and school spirit from positional coaches and players; (6) someone who could get the most out of their players by appealing to their inter-personal growth foremost as an avenue for on field production; and (7) someone that understood that coaches are a reflection of athletic directors and should embrace being hired as a partnership between themselves and decision makers be they athletic director, general manager, or team owner.

Mr. Terry Tumey is director of athletics at Fresno State. Mr. Tumey’s leadership style merges experiences acquired as an assistant coach with UCLA and the Denver Broncos, and

front office work with the San Francisco 49ers. Mr. Tumey believes that operating from a position of leadership requires that he find problems to solve in a manner that serves the population of students on campus, faculty, and staff. Mr. Tumey offered that there is the business of sports, the culture of sports and the academic realm of sports and that a potential coach candidate must authentically check the boxes in being able to understand and teach a successful transformative blueprint to student-athletes. Hence, for Mr. Tumey the criteria for a head coach: (1) be authentic in a manner that promotes coach-to-student athlete relatability; (2) must be open to listening with good intentions to help student athletes' problem solve and mature, which requires being a good teacher and communicator; and (3) must embody a value set that prohibits cutting corners; (4) must understand that coaching is a partnership with the athletic, academic, and business fields within a university setting. One coach criterion that forges is that a potential head coach needs to help student-athletes develop into mature adults. Additionally, Mr. Tumey believes that a good head coach would be one that adapts and moves consistently to support students in times where there maybe racial tension, racial polarization and concern for life stressing events related to politics, criminal and social justice. Mr. Tumey believes that a central feature of good head coach would be an ability to get the most out of their players by supporting those things that matter to them off the field of play. Thus, it logically follows that a head coach must be able to evolve to empathize with players that are impacted by race relations in America. Mr. Tumey believes that collegiate level coach characteristics that transfer to the professional level are: (1) a value system with integrity, which is indicated by a coach not having examples of behaviors that damage the trust of owners and hiring decision makers; (2) leadership skills; (3) communication and being a teacher to diverse populations of men; (3) an organizer and visionary that inspires a group of adult Alpha type men to function for the betterment of the team; (4) be reflexive in the ability to be attentive to the mood of the locker room and/or situational circumstances that are happening that could impact the performance of professional athletes; and (5) ability to create a winning culture by being detail oriented and having a blueprint for the routine activities that occur during football practice.

Mr. Markus Jennings is in his seventh year as an Associate Athletic Director for External Affairs at Sacramento State. His contribution to this research was notable in that he is primarily tasked with revenue generation for the sport's program, and he brings to bare a more youthful generation of black males who hold some decision-making influence when deciding to hire a head coach. In fact, Mr. Jennings has lead searches that resulted in hiring a head football, track and field and women's basketball coach. Mr. Jennings admitted to the power of influence in times where there are famous or highly respected surrogate voices vouching for candidates. Moreover, informal interactions with candidates at professional conferences and/or social settings where there is evidence that promotes positive vibes with respect to character and efficacy are equally influential in hiring head coaches. Mr. Jennings offered that head coach criteria at the college level that transfers to the professional level could be: (1) one who has demonstrated that he knows how to win by providing examples of the characteristics of a winning culture; (2) coming from a winning pedigree as a former player and/or coach, believing that immersion and experience with winning programs

instills winning values; (3) coach players and even other coaches in a manner that maximizes their respective skill sets; (4) cultural relatability as defined by an ability to understand the demographics of a team with respect to off the field situational circumstances that could impact field of play; (5) a coach that already has a diverse staff that is equally relatable to the demographics of a football team; and (6) ability to inspire current players to perform and provide a tangible philosophy that works to recruit the best athletes to the football program.

Athletic Directors, Mr. Anderson, Mrs. Thomas, Mr. Tumey and Associate Athletic Director Mr. Jennings provided head coach criteria indicators that place coaches into the professional talent pipeline. Taken together, the responses reveal that potential candidates need to be (1) leaders, teachers, communicators and able to control a room of Alpha type male athletes; (2) culturally aware of the demographics of the locker room; (3) able to build a winning program and implement a strategy that instills a winning culture; (4) able to provide a culture of care, and/or well-being as measured by mentoring, empathizing, and developing athletes to their fullest on and off the field potential; and (5) able to evolve in such a way as to produce consistent winning programs that generate revenue for colleges or team owners.

Results: Head Coaches and Coordinators in the NFL on Coach Criteria

The results from journalists, lawyers, and athletic directors provided common themes with respect to head coach criteria at both the collegiate and professional level. This section reports the findings from 10 former or current head coaches and 3 coordinators. Hue Jackson, former head coach of the Oakland Raiders and Cleveland Brown participated via a zoom call. Brian Flores, current head coach of the Miami Dolphins completed a phone interview. Herm Edwards, former coach of New York Jets, Bruce Arians, current coach of the 2021, Super Bowl LV winner Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and Andy Reid, current coach of the Kansas City Chiefs, the AFC representative in the 2021 Super Bowl LV and 2020 Super Bowl LIV winner, participated by responding to emailed questions. Information relevant for this report gathered from remaining coaches, Tony Dungy head coach for the Super Bowl Champion Indianapolis Colts, Leslie Frazier former head coach for the Minnesota Vikings and current coordinator with the Buffalo Bills, Mike Tomlin a Super Bowl winning head coach with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Anthony Lynn former coach of the San Diego Chargers and current coordinator with Detroit Lions, and Ron Rivera, current head coach for the Washington Football Team, were the result of reading secondary sources (e.g. books, articles, and interviews). The same can be said about information gathered from offensive coordinators with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Byron Leftwich, Eric Bieniemy with the Kansas City Chiefs, and Jimmy Raye II who has been an offensive coordinator for several teams (e.g., Los Angeles Rams, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, New England Patriots, Kansas City Chiefs, and Washington Redskins).

Hue Jackson's zoom interview was rich with information regarding the appearance of social mobility within the NFL. Mr. Jackson spoke of smoking mirrors where a minority coach could receive a title, but it didn't mean transferring any power or experience that would be

credited towards becoming a head coach. Mr. Jackson offered that there was a time when minority players could go to ownership and request that a minority coach be kept on board and ownership would oblige only by bumping their salary but not necessarily offering a coordinating title. Moreover, minority players could request that a minority coach remain with a team and that a coach may even be given a title without having to engage in coach responsibilities that matched the title. For Mr. Jackson there was a time when teams simply wanted minority coaches who could control a player and thereby control a locker room. In other words, minority coaches were judged based on their ability to keep a locker room intact, manage player egos and/or make sure that players did not engage in activities that would prove detrimental to the team. An additional barrier for minority coaches was not having experience coaching quarterbacks, and play calling as an offensive coordinator, which is the most important position on the offensive side of the ball and arguably the entire team and offense being viewed as requiring more intellectual savvy, respectively. Coaching quarterbacks was viewed as an intellectual endeavor while coaching positional players were viewed more as being smart and able to manage players on and off the field. Mr. Jackson verbalized disappointment in times of being passed over where there was evidence that team owners hired a head coach based on “name sake, notoriety or the big splash” more than actual experience (e.g., The Washington Redskins, team owner Dan Snyder deciding to hire college coach Steve Spurrier instead of Hue Jackson).

Mr. Jackson: When responding to how was Steve Spurrier hired as a head coach and Hue Jackson landing the position as coordinator regardless of professional football tenure and merit. Mr. Jackson responded. *Dan Snyder like many of these owners they are looking for a name. They are looking to win the press conference and when you win the press conference you win in the ticket office. I get where all that comes from. I don't think it is right but that is how they see it. And so that is exactly what was going on and that is how it has been with a lot of these hires.*

Mr. Jackson's criteria for a coach represented an accumulation of experiences from being hired in Oakland and in Cleveland, and criteria he used when hiring a coach: (1) leadership skills must be equivalent to leading men of all colors, ability to build a winning staff of coaches, and improve the offensive side of the football team; (2) ability to convince decision makers that he subscribes to the culture of a football team described as “doing it their way:” (3) knowledge of the position a coach occupied when he entered the league; (4) knowledge of player responsibilities on the offensive or defensive side of the ball; (5) be able to coach a player toward positive progression, which is indicated by individual performance stats; (6) someone who can come in regulate and control the existing population of minority athletes who are holdovers from an outgoing coach regime; (7) not be afraid to have deep conversations with ownership and not be a “yes man” in a manner that declines from non-negotiable issues related to hiring own staff and implementing vision for team success; (8) be prepared to flip the culture of losing and not fall victim to the old regime's cultural identity that may still resonate with players and/or any other team personnel and staff in the

building; and (9) be steadfast in the identity that you bring to a team, meaning stay true to values, and strengths.

Mr. Jackson: *a successful coach needs to be loyal, hardworking, understand your role and do your job. Make sure that you keep everybody all inclusive.*

Mr. Jackson offered a measured tone, particularly deferring to a forthcoming book that he is writing that would benefit a minority coach by identifying “the wolf in sheep’s clothing.” Mr. Jackson hinted at how the book will disclose the great divide between truth and lies that were persistent in Cleveland. Still, Mr. Jackson offered enough information to at least trace his experiences as a minority coach in the NFL in a manner that provided something of value for this research.

Brian Flores, the current Miami Dolphins head coach was a participant in this study by way of a phone interview on July 13, 2021. Mr. Flores was the last first person interview and his responses proved two things: (1) that Tex Schramm’s statement “when I’m hiring, I know who I want;” remains a guiding principle for the modern day NFL; and (2) a minority head coach candidate would benefit from knowing what that “want” is given the interview presents a limited time frame to convince team owners that the right candidate for the job is comfortably standing before them (Duru 2011:56). Mr. Flores offered that what team owners really want is to “not be told what to do” and that includes who they decide to hire. The goal then is to offer information for consideration, which is exactly what this report has aimed to do. Mr. Flores lamented that the best preparation for head coach interviews is to have participated in a head coach interview. That’s the dilemma that the Rooney Rule tried to solve, which is to get owners and/or decision makers to examine minority coaches during an interview process with a real chance at getting the head coach job. The push back is owners and/or decision makers already possessing an “image of what they want in a coach” and perhaps minimally are interested in proceeding with an interview process that won’t change their minds. Enter John Wooten’s rebuttal “*we’re not arguing whether you know who you want or not, we’re arguing whether you got the best guy. How can you tell me you got the best guy when you haven’t interviewed all these guys*” (Duru 2011:56)? The issue, the gap between Schramm and Wooten seems to persist enough to warrant continued investigation given the disproportionate minority coach landscape after 102 seasons. Mr. Flores, summed it up when he stated that a successful head coach interview has a few components: (1) establish rapport; (2) break down preconceived notions about race that contributes to barriers; (3) have an understanding that you may be the first minority that owners have come into close contact with outside of what happens on a sideline of a practice football field; and (4) be prepared to establish rapport, owner comfort in you, break down barriers and attempt to gain some level of trust in a limited 3 to 6 hour time frame. Mr. Flores suggested that head coach candidates need to be infused with the type of confidence to make it known to owners that being comfortable is something that must be mutual. Stated another way Mr. Flores believes that a head coach candidate needs to have enough confidence to inform owners and decision makers that if the candidate is not equally as comfortable with the position, then there is not a guaranteed acceptance of a head coach offer. Mr. Flores believes

that authenticity and understanding the functions of every aspect of every department in an organization is best achieved by bringing all of one's personal experiences over their lifetime with football into the interview. Pivoting, Mr. Flores offered his criteria for a coach hire: (1) leadership, communication and teaching is a concomitant relationship; and (2) hunger, a selfless desire to teach an athlete to be better in practice and perform better during games.

Three coaches emailed responses to five questions relative to the unique process of hiring a head coach. Bruce Arians, head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers is lauded for having a diverse staff. In particular, the team recently won a Super Bowl with Byron Leftwich, the offensive coordinator and Todd Bowles, the defensive coordinator. Additionally, Mr. Arians has two other African American coaches holding significant positions in Assistant Head coach and run game coordinator, Harold Goodwin and Special Teams coordinator, Keith Armstrong. Andy Reid, head coach of the Kansas City Chiefs has arguably the number one discussed minority coach candidate for hire in offensive coordinator, Eric Bieniemy. Herm Edwards, a deserving coach and beneficiary of the Rooney Rule, former coach of the New York Jets and current head coach of the Arizona State Sun Devils. All share similar ideas about a head coach hiring process. Arians, Reid, and Edwards agree that a head coach hire is unique for each team because of perceived fitness and/or as one coach stated, "is this the voice of a franchise leader?" All three agreed that the uniqueness of a hiring process depends on a team's culture and identity. Herm Edwards offered a clear explanation of team culture.

Mr. Edwards: *Team culture to me means developing leaders and providing leadership. You need to empower players and allow them to collaborate, share knowledge, communicate, and most importantly - support one another. It's the way players and staff members speak to each other. The values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors shared by the players need to be a part of the culture of the team. Having respect for each other, even when there are different personalities and opinions, must be implemented. Your team culture must have diversity.*

Team identity defines a team's mission as not only winning but building a program that promotes a style of winning. Style of winning is contingent upon the appropriate mix of coaches who share, trust, and are loyal to the process that trickles down from ownership, team executives, and general managers. Stated another way, Arians, Reid, and Edwards agreed that head coach decisions are unique for every team because teams have different identities that are linked to team ownership, region of the country, city location, and fan base. It is both culture and identity that resonate with the fan base; therefore, a head coach must represent the culture and identity of a team in a way that wins the financial and social support of its fan base.

Arians, Reid, and Edwards also share common themes concerning coach criteria: (1) be a knowledgeable communicator and teacher that instills loyalty and trust; (2) be a teacher that inspires confidence in players; (3) have a passion for the bottom line, which is winning and respect the process that it takes to win; and (4) demonstrate a strong work ethic as indicated by a thorough approach to coach duties, be accessible and accountable. Herm Edwards extends his responses to include: (1) be able to problem solve both on and off the field; and (2) have a balanced work and family approach. These two additional offerings by

Herm Edwards are indicators of a culture of care that seems to resonate with athletic directors in this study.

The next group of coaches at some point disclosed their thought process relative to the NFL's hiring cycle and this report seized the opportunity to dissect their responses whether their responses appeared in opinion pieces or were the result of interviews from another source. Tony Dungy, a Super Bowl winning head coach pinned a letter to the NFL during the early part of 2021, which identified the problem of hiring minorities and expressed confidence in the owner's ability to respond positively to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mr. Dungy respectfully asks that team owners prove that his faith in their integrity and ability to correct racial disparities and inequity in hiring practices be justified by their sincere efforts.

Mr. Dungy: *The NFL has a lot of things to be proud of, but we are not giving our fans, or our players, the best possible game. We are cheating our fans and we are cheating ourselves. And you are the only people who can change this. The problem is we are not utilizing all of our resources because we aren't truly embracing minority hiring in every aspect of our game. Now I know there are many people who disagree with this statement. They would say, "Every owner is trying to win and therefore you will always hire the best people." But if you take a look at the hiring landscape of the last four years you will certainly come to the conclusion that is not true. And please understand this is not about one individual (Eric Bieniemy). It's not about whether we have two Black general managers or four. It is about the mindset of finding leadership and utilizing ALL the talent available to the NFL. This is not a new problem and it's one that you have fixed before. It has just taken a little work on your parts.*

Mr. Dungy's letter was a personal testament to what he felt he had to do to be a head coach in the NFL. Therefore, Mr. Dungy's open letter, provided evidence for head coach criteria: (1) be responsible and accountable for what is taking place with players on the team; (2) be a problem solver, fixer, and change agent in instances where players are acting in ways that are detrimental to the team; and (3) be a teacher, communicator, and developer of a plan to reach the goal of becoming a championship team.

Leslie Frazier, former head coach of the Minnesota Vikings and current defensive coordinator with the Buffalo Bills contends that he has more than met the threshold for consideration for another head coach job by being a head coach and a defensive coordinator. Still, he was passed over during the NFL's most recent hiring cycle. Mr. Frazier candidly revealed his frustration to co-team owner of the Buffalo Bills, Kim Pegula.

Mr. Frazier: *Kim, I didn't get an interview and how does that make me feel? I feel like there is something there, a sense of discrimination when I see other people getting at least an interview and I haven't gotten any recognition at all.*

Mr. Frazier in his conversation with co-team owner, Kim Pegula dialed into what the journalists had noted relative to frustration and disappointment of being omitted from hiring cycles regardless of merit at the expense of what appears to be some form of discrimination from the perspective of a black man. For Frazier, being bypassed by perhaps less comparable contemporaries is a refusal to even recognize NFL meritorious tenure (Gaughan 2020).

Mr. Jason Reid's' article *NFL's Minority Head Coaches Weigh in on State of Diversity in their Ranks* (2019) queried, Mike Tomlin, head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers; Anthony Lynn, head coach of the San Diego Chargers; and Ron Rivera head coach of the Carolina Panthers. Tomlin, Lynn, and Rivera offered that minority candidates are not getting opportunities and the downward trend in minority head coaches is disappointing. Lynn offered that there are pipeline jams due to a revolving criteria or call for coordinators on the offensive or defensive side of the ball. Rivera offered that the criteria does not seem to consistently apply for certain racial categories. Although Tomlin, Lynn and Rivera were cautious in their responses, it is logical to conclude that their responses represented a call for continued work ethic to develop young coaching talent, which does not necessarily bode well for minority coaches with years of investment in the NFL. The relevant takeaway from this article is that owners appear to be guided by criteria relative to being a coordinator and/or play caller and are aware that there is a pipeline, a training school for young coaches or a holding station for tenured coaches that is available. In fact, owners are given the same list of potential head coaches per hiring cycle but what they do with those names continues to warrant scrutiny about the racial divide in hiring outcomes that favors white coaches.

Journalist Mr. Jim Trotter (2021) produced an article that examined two high profile offensive coordinators for Super Bowl winning teams, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Kansas City Chiefs, respectively. Byron Leftwich and Eric Bieniemy are two primary candidates for consideration for a head coach position but were not extended either an interview in Leftwich's case or an offer in Bieniemy's case. Bruce Arians has gone on record stating that he is "pissed off" given Byron Leftwich has met the criteria for head coach consideration: (1) coached quarterbacks; and (2) play caller but has not received an opportunity to interview for a head coach position. Leftwich himself understands the responsibilities of a good coach: (1) ability to coach and lead men; and (2) working to make sure players are in the best position to be successful but won't allow himself to dwell on not receiving an opportunity to interview. Eric Bieniemy, having participated in several interviews for a head coach position has yet to secure a job offer. Mr. Bieniemy's philosophy speaks to being a well-rounded coach that is knowledgeable about as many positions on the football field as possible. Although Mr. Bieniemy acknowledged that he has frustration over not being offered a head coach position he has not allowed frustration to derail his commitment to his job as a coach, which is to prepare players to be successful enough to win football games. For the record Mr. Bieniemy has at least 4 essential criteria for a head coach: (1) he is a part of a successful coach tree under Andy Reid; (2) he is associated with a winning culture that has produced a Super Bowl victory; (3) he is an offensive coordinator; and (4) has worked with quarterback Patrick Mahomes. Despite, not receiving well deserved opportunities for a head coach position, both Leftwich and Bieniemy are committed to perfecting their craft and presenting themselves as the best candidates for hire. Alternatively, Mr. Jimmy Raye II has retired after more than three decades as a coach, senior offensive assistant, and coordinator for seven different NFL teams. Mr. Raye II more than likely possessed many of the criteria detailed in this study. He lists two that he felt he possessed: (1) expertise; and (2) skilled ability to lead men but never seemed to be "what team owners wanted." For that reason and being a witness to how other minority head coaches were passed over for head coach positions, Mr. Raye II has degrees of freedom to express the highest level of pessimism regarding team owner's commitment to diversity.

Mr. Raye II: *You think you are in a fair and equitable system and being judged by your abilities and your expertise and your leadership qualities to lead men but in the end none of that matters because they don't have any rules in hiring. They hire who they want to hire, qualifications be damned...Owners are buffeted by who influences them—the general managers and team presidents, whoever they talk to because they don't run the business of football as they run their private business...But the toy that they play with as far as their football teams, they don't feel any responsibility to address the issue. They've proven that over the last 100 years (Trotter 2021:3).*

For Mr. Raye II, 42 years of personal experience and witnessing the continuous suppression of opportunities that befell not only him, but minority coaches like Mr. Sherm Lewis makes it too easy to plug in new minority names who are similarly circumstanced. This easy fill in the blank of so many well deserving minority head coaches can make it difficult for historians of the game to think optimistically about diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Results: General Managers in the NFL on Coach Criteria

General Managers and team presidents are influential decision makers when it comes to hiring head coaches. During a third party interview with Drew Dougherty (2021), Nick Caserio, General Manager for the Houston Texans identified his coach criteria: (1) teacher and communicator of the culture that focuses on team first, and others before self; (2) ability to lead men and optimize their performance on the field of play; (3) an organizer or having the ability to devise practice and game plans that deliver a winning blueprint; (4) ability to adapt and adjust to adversity; and (5) effectively evaluate players and coaches in order to make changes where necessary in the interest of winning games.

Tony Dungy, wrote a forward in Jeremi Duru's 2011 book *Advancing the Ball*. Tony Dungy recalled that then General Manager for the New York Giants, George Young (1979-1997) offered him friendly advice about his aspirations of becoming a coach. Mr. Young's coach criteria centered on appearance.

Mr. Dungy: *George Young the general manager of the New York Giants told me that if I wanted to have a future in coaching. I needed to shave my beard. He felt I didn't look like a coach. George was a friend of mine and he wasn't insulting me. He was trying to be helpful. He didn't know it, but his words really laid out the problem the NFL had been facing for years. There was a stereotype of what an NFL coach looked like and even if I shaved, I (and the other African American assistant coaches) still wouldn't fit the perception of what owners were looking for in their coaches (Duru 2011: xi).*

Mr. Dungy would go on to say that there is hope for improved equality because of changes in ownership, and a mindset that evaluates humanity differently. Mr. Jerry Reese, general manager of the New York Giants (2007-2017) when they won two Super Bowls participated in this study by way of being interviewed during a zoom call. Mr. Reese started out as a positions coach and then assistant coach on the college level. He then took a scouting job with the New York Giants and over the course of 13 years became an assistant director of professional personnel, then director of player personnel, senior vice president and general manager. According to Mr. Reese the criteria for a head coach is: (1) have the presence and charisma to lead men and convince them that you are there to help them be better; (2) be a motivator and knowledgeable about offense, defense and special teams; (3)

be detailed oriented in practice that translates to how to manage situational football during games and making adjustments in response to competition; (4) be able to coach the coaches and coach the players; (5) be able to routinely command the locker room by being able to check the pulse of a team, evaluate players and identify players who can lead in the locker room; (6) be a manager, gate-keeper and problem solver of issues in a manner that prevents it from being detrimental to the team and warranting the general manager's attention; and (7) be able to teach and communicate to a diverse locker room about team culture and team identity where players are not functioning as independent contractors on the field but are working for the betterment of the team. In terms of assistant coaches, Mr. Reese states: (1) be able to control their room, handle their room and keep players in order; (2) get their players to play at a higher level by teaching and developing fundamental skills; and (3) must have the mentality of not allowing a player to fail. According to Mr. Reese, the connection between head coaches and assistant coaches is cemented by the trust that coaches extend to assistant coaches and that is why it is equally important for head coach candidates to have a staff ready to go upon being hired.

The findings from this section of general managers are consistent with what Mr. Reese suggested. Mr. Reese contends that the criteria for a head coach is not unique, rather it is the team that is unique in terms of ownership, culture, and identity, which are linked to a team's regional location and market. The findings support thematic indicators of leadership, teaching, communicator, motivational agent that inspires player performance, and manager of player personnel issues,

Results: Team Presidents and Team Owners in the NFL on Coach Criteria

Result reported in this section were derived from third person introductory press conferences, videos, and documentaries specific to the Detroit Lions, Arizona Cardinals, New York Jets, Buffalo Bills, and Houston Texans.

Mr. Rod Wood was appointed Team President and CEO of the Detroit Lions by owner Sheila Ford Hamp. He has served in this capacity since 2015. Mr. Wood's criteria for a head coach were derived from an introductory press conference revealing the new coach of the Detroit Lions for the 2021 season. Mr. Wood's coach criteria: (1) ability to be an exceptional listener and communicator; (2) ability to engage players in a manner that builds a culture of inclusiveness; (3) have self-awareness and be reflexive concerning the issues of today's professional athlete; and (4) a tough-minded hard-working mentality that matches the tough-minded work ethic of a manufacturing industrial city like Detroit. Detroit Lions' team owner Sheila Ford Hamp agrees with team president Mr. Wood, but she added that a head coach needed to be: (1) competitive; (2) be able to establish a one heartbeat culture out of a room of diverse athletes; (3) be able to work with, teach and lead a coaching staff.

Mr. Michael Bidwill, Team President of the Arizona Cardinals hired Kliff Kingsbury because he fulfilled the following criteria: (1) young innovative, offensive mind and track record of play calling that would fit a quarterback driven league; (2) proven track record of success with grooming quarterbacks; (3) ability to manage a team and doing it at the college level where student-athlete demands and recruiting mattered, which served as proof that

the hire could successfully manage a professional team; (4) competent teacher and communicator that can get the best out of coaches and players.

Mr. Wood and Mr. Bidwill have answered the question of what the image of their coach looks like in the hiring of Dan Campbell and Kliff Kingsbury. Christopher Johnson, interim owner of the New York Jets offered that he was interested in a coach with an “all gas, no break mantra.” For Mr. Johnson a head coach should be: (1) an engaged leader of men with character and passion; (2) an immediate presence on the football field amongst player; (3) able to handle the pressures of coaching a big market football team; (4) innovative, collaborative, and able to instill intensity and passion for the game of football; and (5) able to connect with players so that they feel part of a family. Mr. Johnson’s criteria was apparently satisfied by the recent hiring of minority head coach Mr. Robert Saleh.

Mrs. Kim Pegula is co-team owner of the Buffalo Bills. Mrs. Pegula is one of eight members of the NFL’s Workplace Diversity Committee of owners and executive personnel. Mrs. Pegula’s take on coach criteria is reversed to include the team’s investment in coach talent that is currently on staff, which she acknowledges can be adversely impacted when a team is not winning resulting in high coach turnover. Moreover, Mrs. Pegula believes that owner-to-potential coach interaction prior to hiring cycles breeds familiarity, rapport, comfort, and trust, which are necessary criteria for head coaches. The admitted irony is that functions that bring potential head coach candidates into the company of team owners is relatively non-existent. Hence, it is quite possible that a coordinator like Leslie Frazier could be ignored during hiring cycles. The remedy would be to allow coordinators to accompany team owners to otherwise exclusive team owner gatherings and allow meet and greets in such a way as to not violate NFL policy with respect to tampering.

Kai McNair, owner of the Houston Texans, and with the advice from General Manager Nick Caserio selected Mr. David Culley as the next head coach. Kai McNair’s criteria for a head coach: (1) league respect; and (2) years of experience. Mr. McNair apparently desired a head coach that would build a family culture where players genuinely care about one another and the team concept of winning with integrity. Moreover, Mr. Culley, a minority was hired to lead coaches and players to bring out the best in one another.

Results: Player, Scout, Agent and Team Executive of the NFL on Coach Criteria

Last but certainly not least is Mr. John Wooten’s participation in this study. Mr. Wooten by far has dedicated the most time to this research project by completing emailed questions, several phone interviews and two in-person interviews at his home. Mr. John Wooten offered a rich assessment of the legacy of race in America, but those comments are beyond the scope of this study. Mr. John Wooten’s detailed accounts of people, places, and circumstances in and around the NFL are the makings of a bestselling autobiography. Mr. John Wooten is the history of the NFL and he is a magnificent factual storyteller providing first person accounts and person-to-person interactions with so many people who have shaped and witnessed the NFL evolve from 1959 through 2021. Much of what he delivered during those interviews concerning the impact of race on professional football is mirrored

in Part 1 of this research. In other words, the information provided by Mr. Wooten's during his interviews were consistent with the review of literature for this project. Now comes the results of his comments as it pertains to criteria for a head coach. Mr. Wooten has over a 62-year tenure in the NFL. Mr. Wooten's career started as a drafted player for the Cleveland Browns in 1959. Mr. Wooten would retire from playing football after 9 years. After which, Mr. Wooten became a sport's agent for Pro Sports Advisors between 1973-1975. He would then go on to become a scout for the Dallas Cowboys between 1975-1979 and was promoted within the organization to Director of Pro Personnel in 1980. In 1991, Mr. Wooten developed life-skills programs for players in his role as Director of Player Programs for the NFL. Mr. Wooten would take on the position of Player Personnel and Vice President of Player Personnel with the Philadelphia Eagles between 1992-1994. Mr. Wooten became Assistant Director of Pro and College Scouting with the Baltimore Ravens in 1998 and remained with the Ravens as a consultant until 2003. In 2003, Wooten became the chairman of the Fritz Pollard Alliance.

Mr. Wooten's tenure with the NFL has been extremely significant in advancing race relations in America, addressing minority coach and executive inequality in the NFL and implementing a culture of well-being for professional athletes. Mr. Wooten has been at the forefront of diversity, equity, and inclusion long before the Rooney Rule and the Fritz Pollard Alliance. Thus, his outlook on the criteria for a head coach is significantly related to his six-decade long tenure with the NFL, which is more than any of the participants for this research.

Mr. Wooten's interest in equitable hiring practices stems from him not having ever played for a black head coach throughout his high school, collegiate and professional career. It was equally bothersome to Mr. Wooten that Marion Motley a two-way player, at the fullback and linebacker position for the Cleveland, who was a participant at practice daily, wanted to coach but never got a chance while other white teammates went on to become head coaches. It was bothersome for Mr. Wooten how white players were given opportunities to coach while black players were being denied. The opportunity for Mr. Wooten to be a scout, agent and then work with the Dallas Cowboys provided an avenue to address racial disparities in coaching in the NFL. Mr. Wooten is proud to have lobbied successfully for the Cowboys first black positional coach Al Lavan in 1980. He is equally proud to have been in attendance with predominantly black coaches who had convened whenever there was an all-star game, senior bowl, east west shrine game, Montgomery blue/grey game or combine. The purpose of these meetings was to strategize and support efforts to break into the head coach ranks of the NFL and the guiding principle for the movement would be solidarity. Mr. Wooten advocated for minority head coaches based on: (1) evidence of teaching and being knowledgeable about x's and o's of the game; (2) work ethic; (3) detailed oriented organizer who can coach players to be successful on the field; (4) track record of success; and (5) ability to evaluate player talent and effective assistant coaching.

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

This research was guided by two questions: (1) does a head coach criteria exist; and (2) how unique is a head coach criteria? The results indicate that a head coach criterion does exist and is not necessarily unique. This is a data driven logical conclusion because there are numerous examples of criteria commonalities mentioned by journalists, lawyers, athletic directors, coordinators, coaches, general managers, team presidents, and owners (e.g. winning games, leadership, ability to teach, communicate, knowledgeable, problem solver, ability to coach and evaluate other coaches to improve team performance, instill confidence, inspire, motivate, ability to empathize, recognize and manage player behavior that is detrimental to team culture, identity and team family solidarity). However, the criteria for coaching merges with the reality of being a unique process because head coaches must be a unique fit for a football team. Head coach fitness is contingent upon: (1) owner's personality and preconceived image of a head coach; (2) team culture, identity and philosophy that are significantly related to team owners and decision makers philosophy on style of coach; (3) the market, city, regional location of a team; and (4) perceptions of social and financial support a head coach "face and voice of a franchise" would receive from the fan base.

This research has served the purpose of identifying a detailed coach criteria and to some extent has provided clarity regarding what team owners "want" in a head coach. Therefore, given an aim was to close the gap between Schramm and Wooten's discussion on owner's wants versus opportunity affordances, this report contributed data for consideration in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the NFL.

The recommendations drawn from this report is based on the idea that a coach can be hired based on merit and fitness for respective teams in an equitable manner. The first recommendation is to acknowledge that team owners are entitled to choices. However, a verified qualitative approach based on owner and decision maker's objective criteria should be introduced into the equation in a nominally and operationally defined manner. The second recommendation is to apply a quantitative method where objective indicators of coaching success is examined. The third recommendation is to combine the above-mentioned qualitative approach with the quantitative method, which would produce a numerically weighted candidate for comparison in a hiring cycle.

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