

**Classification and Caste: Forecasting an NFL Head Coach  
Typology Using a Qualitative Assessment Instrument**

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### Abstract

*Using a sociological framework consisting of Attribution, Exchange, and Social Learning theories coupled with a social scientific wave analysis (time snapshot) methodology, this report examined whether a head coach typology emerges from a sampling of championship caliber NFL head coaches. The data suggests that human agency is consistently present amongst championship caliber head coaches in the NFL, regardless of race. When examining racial differences in White and African American head coaches, the separating factors and/or differing factors that African American head coaches must overcome are cultural signifiers, often referred to as cultural regalia.*

## INTRODUCTION

A comparative study provides strength, validation, and generalizability to highlight a social narrative about head coaches. To this end, this research provides some insight concerning an NFL caliber head coach typology. Examining NFL coaches who have won Super Bowls over the past five football seasons and two additional years where two African American head coaches won Super Bowls, reveals that there is a classification and caste of head coaches. Stated another way, examining performance-based outcomes relative to winning championships reveals a coaching classification (e.g. a kind of coach) and a caste of coaches (e.g. a type of coach). This report represents a call to action from Mr. Rod Graves, Executive Director of the Fritz Pollard Alliance. Mr. Graves graciously met with Eneje Consulting in Dallas on December 14, 2021. Through several conversations with Mr. Graves, the importance of a supplemental study was deemed necessary to add value to the merits of applying a qualitative approach in a manner that complements a quantitative algorithm.

This supplemental report comes on the heels of an initial NFL report, *Minority Outsiders: An Examination of the NFL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Habits in Hiring Head Coaches* (Cureton, 2021). The primary objective of that report was to provide sociological coverage of the NFL through reviewing the literature that corresponds to its 102-season history. Specifically, the report explored how the NFL processed racial dynamics while coping with historical challenges relative to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The primary finding is best captured by the statement:

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 (Cureton, 2021:4; Anderson 1996).

A logical extension of this statement permits the contention that the NFL has been at worst racially toxic (to match America's corresponding inter-racial legacy) and at best the NFL has been inconsistent in promoting the ideology of "merit" as the primary significant variable for diversity, equity, and inclusion hires.

Moreover, given team owners and decision makers do not like to be told whom to hire there are 4 fundamental problems to overcome when dealing with teams that have never hired a minority head coach, can be convinced to hire a minority head coach and have actually hired a minority head coach: (1) overcoming perceptions of minorities representing a racial demerit; (2) threshold for convincing that a minority hire does not create team imbalance and/or shift in power dynamics or strain/stain a team's identity; (3) threshold for convincing owners and decision makers that a minority hire would be race neutral when dealing with racial turbulence on and off the field, in the locker-room and administratively; and (4) threshold of convincing owners that a minority hire would be an

effective change agent and effective liaison between players, coaches, administrators, executives and team owners.

The challenge to accurately assess and estimate owners and decision makers' threshold of convincibility is monumental because it must be accomplished in a manner that is racially neutral or operating without the presumption of power dynamics that are inherently and/or intentionally racist. The best way to approach diversity, equity, and inclusion is to provide an instrument that is uniquely specific to team owners and decision makers while at the same time affording them an objective apparatus that is empirically verifiable with logical causal relationship integrity. A Qualitative Assessment Instrument Code Book was developed from incorporating the perceptions of a combination of 32 journalists, lawyers, athletic directors, NFL head coaches, and coordinators, general managers, team presidents, and team owners who participated and/or contributed to the *Minority Outsiders: An Examination of the NFL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Habits in Hiring Head Coaches* report (Cureton 2021). The construction of the Qualitative Assessment Instrument Code Book provides a quantifiable measure that is derived from operationalizing (numerical code construction) otherwise non-numerical terms. For example, 40 years ago Schramm disclosed that he knows who he wants to hire, and John Wooten's retort had you hired the best guy in the absence of not having looked at the field of candidates (Duru 2011). The conversation between Schramm and Wooten provides abstract terms that can be empirically measured by systematically performing a content analysis. Content analysis involves word auditing derived from thematic, conceptual representation of terms that have in common, power of influence, frequency, and duration of word coverage during conversation. Before proceeding, it is important to state that Sociology is the academic and scholarly scientific discipline that undergirds the solution to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the coaching ranks. Additionally, a similar step-by-step theoretical, and social scientific methodology has predictive forecast value for executive and administrative opportunities throughout the NFL as a League and the 32 independent organizational teams. The scope of this study is NFL head coaches.

To be clear then Sociology is a social science that examines macro level institutional structural, cultural, and social dynamics and micro level human agency, relationship, interactional and social network dynamics.

## **THE ORIGINS OF THE QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT CODE BOOK**

The importance of the conversation between Tex Schramm and John Wooten can't be overstated. Hence, for the benefit of readers that have yet to read the *Minority Outsiders: An Examination of the NFL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Habits in Hiring Head Coaches*, report the following passage is worth offering:

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, Wooten,*

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—included in Cureton's 2021:7-8).

Since the *Minority Outsiders: An Examination of the NFL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Habits in Hiring Head Coaches* report was concluded, Mr. John Wooten has not only reviewed the report but has provided additional insight about the conversations between Schramm and himself, which he defined as serious given the importance of fair consideration for opportunities in the NFL that can improve minorities' generational life course chances and stratification outcomes.