PERSISTENCE IN THE FACE OF CAREER OBSTACLES: THE COACHING EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE FOOTBALL COACHES

By

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To my mother (Stacey Singer), sister (Kaleigh Turick), and brother (Brett Turick)
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Persistence in the Face of Career Obstacles: The Coaching Experiences of African American College Football Coaches

By

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During the 2017 college football season, 55.9% of players, 27.8% of assistant coaches, and 10.8% of head coaches at the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision level were Black (Lapchick, 2018). The racial discrepancy between the player and coaching pools contradicts the notion that the two should mirror one another since players are natural candidates to become coaches after their playing careers (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998). The lack of Black coaches in college football must be examined in the hopes that research findings will improve the profession for Black men, and encourage Black student-athletes to believe that a coaching career is realistic for them.

This study involved gathering the lived experiences of 17 Black men that either currently or formerly worked in the college coaching profession. Understanding a) their experiences in the profession, b) the racial inequalities that they must overcome to break into, remain, and advance in the profession, c) the potential existence of racial tasking in coaching, d) their opinions on the research that attempts to explain their potentially disparate experiences, and e) determine what ideas they may have for reforming the profession, were central aims of this inquiry.

Using constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) to analyze the data, seven themes and 23 subthemes emerged in the data. Participants shared why they chose to coach, what their
experiences have been in the profession, their career aspirations and goals, how they have experienced and observed racial inequality in their profession, the existence of racial tasking in coaching, their knowledge of the research that has examined their underrepresentation, and their suggestions for improving racial inequality in the future.

These coaches viewed their profession in a positive and negative light, indicating that navigating through a White-dominated, and privileged, occupation can be challenging. They supported the existence of racial tasking and were able to provide context as to how they are tasked differently than their White counterparts. Additionally, they offered comments that suggest how research and affirmative action efforts can be improved in the future. Furthermore, they suggested future research projects that they believe would help in promoting racial equality in college football.
Prior to the start of the 2017 college football season, 21 of the 130 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (DI-FBS) programs conducted searches to hire a new head coach. Of note, was that only three of the newly hired head coaches were Black. Given that around 16 percent of the head coaching jobs were available and only three were filled by a Black coaching candidate may signify that the positive trends found after the 2010 season regarding the hiring of Black head football coaches (Bopp & Sagas, 2012) may have plateaued as Turick and Bopp (2016) speculated. The coaching movement resulted in a decrease in minority coaches in 2017 compared to 2016, as four minority coach departures [Darrell Hazell (Purdue), Trent Miles (Georgia State), Charlie Strong (Texas), and Willie Taggart (USF)] were replaced by three minority coach hires [Jay Norvell (Nevada), Charlie Strong (USF), and Willie Taggart (Oregon)].

The lack of minority coaches in college football is interesting when considering the number of minority players. The 2017 Racial and Gender Report Card for College Sport stated that 55.9 percent of DI-FBS players were Black, 27.8 percent of DI-FBS assistant coaches were Black, and 10.8 percent of DI-FBS head coaches were Black (Lapchick et al., 2018). Since the largest group of college football players are Black, Everhart and Chelladurai (1998) would suggest that a similar ratio of coaches might be Black, if former players are considered to be prime candidates to transition into the coaching profession. Agyemang and DeLorme (2010) remarked that when Black athletes represent a substantial portion of the total participation in a sport while holding few leadership positions within the same sport, it sends a message that Blacks are good enough to play but not to lead or coach. Additionally, they claimed that since coaching salaries in college sport can be quite lucrative – Zimbalist (2010) remarked that many
head football coaches at the FBS level earn five to ten times more than university presidents – allowing Black players to generate revenue through their participation in sport, but then denying them the opportunity to earn money in the profession as coaches is immoral, unethical, and racist.

Despite the success of Black head coaches at the professional level (Branham, 2008; Madden & Ruther, 2011), Black coaches at the collegiate level have had a difficult time obtaining the head and assistant coaching positions. The fact that many minority head coaches have struggled at the collegiate level, with White head coaches having statistically higher winning percentages (Turick & Bopp, 2016), may have created a bias in the minds of administrators regarding their ability to lead teams. Additionally, the media’s continued depiction of White coaches as more knowledgeable than their Black counterparts (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010) further validates racial assumptions that administrators might possess. Black coaches might also face more pressure to win sooner than White coaches, as Turick and Bopp (2016) found that White head coaches are afforded nearly a full year more on average than Blacks to lead their programs.

Former University of Colorado head football coach Jon Embree stressed this fact in his farewell press conference when he said, “You know we (Black head coaches) don’t get opportunities. At the end of the day, you’re fired and that’s it. Right, wrong, or indifferent. Tyrone Willingham was the only one who got fired and got hired again. We get bad jobs and no time to fix them” (Gemmell, 2012, para. 7). This quote reflects Wingfield’s (2012) claim that Black men in leadership positions are most likely cognizant of how much harsher they are evaluated than Whites. Coach Embree’s comment should be amended to note that the University of South Florida hired former University of Texas head coach Charlie Strong prior to the 2017
season, and the University of Arizona hired former Texas A&M head coach Kevin Sumlin prior to the 2018 season making them the second and third Black men to receive another chance to lead a FBS program, respectively.

For those Black coaches that seek opportunities to become a head coach, it is important that they hold the right job. Recent hires in college football show a growing trend of administrators hiring offensive-minded coaches (Barnett, 2015; Dodd, 2015; Forde, 2015). According to Dodd (2015), the most recent hires around the country have been offensive coaches, as they sell tickets, draw recruits and energize the fan base. Bopp and Sagas (2012) found, during the 2010 season, that 7.6 percent of offensive coordinators were Black compared to 17.2 percent of defensive coordinators being Black. This discrepancy between where minority coaches are serving as coordinators does not suggest that increases in minority head coaches will rise if recent hiring trends continue to be followed. Overall, Black coaches have held 8.5 percent of head coaching positions from 2005-2017 (See Appendix A).

The lack of promotion of Black assistant coaches to coordinator positions, and subsequently head coach positions, is concerning for Black individuals that desire to obtain those roles. Furthermore, it should be noted that desire does not necessarily have to exist, as denying someone the opportunity to hold a position, even if they would be uninterested if offered, because of his/her race is still discriminatory. Despite arguments that Black coaches might be self-selecting or limiting themselves out of contention for head coaching positions, Cunningham, Bruening, and Straub (2006) found that Blacks did not differ from Whites in their desire to become a head coach. Additionally, they found that Black coaches perceived discrimination as a barrier to obtaining a head coach position and that Black coaches experienced greater occupational turnover intentions than their White counterparts. The perception of discrimination
is likely real, as Yee (2015) described intercollegiate athletic departments as spaces ruled by White men that “possess a very, very narrow worldview” (para. 9). Just as Black assistant coaches aspire towards the position of head football coach, so too do Black student-athletes (Park, Tomasini, & Shields, 2010).

Extending the conversation to include Black student-athletes, a potential reason has been put forth explaining that Whites hold more coaching positions because Black players are more focused on their professional opportunities than their White counterparts (Cunningham, 2003; Eitzen, 2015), which would allow their White counterparts to enter into the coaching profession earlier. Counter to that belief, Park et al. (2010) surveyed 210 student-athletes and found that Black players were more certain than their White peers they could obtain a coaching job in the professional ranks following their playing careers. Over two-thirds of Black student-athletes sampled stated they had an interest in the coaching profession, an interest level virtually equivalent to their White teammates. These findings were similar to Everhart and Chelladurai (2004) who determined race did not have any effect on one’s desire to coach, which was contradictory to Cunningham’s (2003) study which found approximately one-third of Black football student-athletes had an interest in coaching, a figure significantly less than their White peers. The Black student-athletes he surveyed perceived less opportunities to coach would be available to them and were subsequently less interested in becoming a collegiate coach, though there were no differences in intent to become a coach.

Day (2012) described the traditional coaching path, by discussing how most coaches enter the profession through either serving as a volunteer or graduate assistant. The next step involves, hopefully, moving on to a position coach opportunity, coordinator, and then head coach. Starting in 2018, teams competing at the FBS level are able to have 10 on-field coaches
(Silverstein, 2017); usually broken-down to one head coach, two coordinators, and seven assistant/position coaches. Vannini reported that Black coaches were hired into 36 of the 105 (34.3%) 10th on-field role positions (personal communication, May 27, 2018). Day remarked that “because nearly all coaches begin their full-time careers as a position coach, segregation is built into the labor market structure as coaches start out in either a central or non-central coaching position” (p. 8). Bopp and Sagas (2012) noted that Black coaches occupied more than half of the coaching positions for running backs, wide receivers, and defensive backs, which are typically viewed as non-central positions. Despite somewhat mixed results regarding the career coaching aspirations of Black student-athletes, it is evident that interest is not positively associated with achievement among potential Black head and assistant coaches in college football. Also potentially noteworthy, administrators, or important stakeholders, in college football, tend to hire White coaches, which could be a product of their own racial identity.

To that end, the lack of minority coaches may be attributed to the lack of minority administrators. Regarding collegiate athletic leadership, as of the 2017-2018 academic year, 89.2 percent of university presidents were White, 77.7 percent of athletic directors were White, 85.4 percent of faculty athletics representatives were White, and 100 percent of conference commissioners were White (Lapchick et al., 2018). Overall, college sport received a “C+” grade in the 2017 Racial and Gender Report Card for College Sport for racial hiring practices. That report card is produced by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES). As an organization, TIDES’s mission is to educate the public regarding race and gender hiring practices in sport. TIDES worked with Advocates for Athletic Equity (AAE), an organization that advocated for the promotion and/or hiring of ethnic minority coaches into positions of leadership at all levels of sport, to create report cards for racial and gender hiring practices in sport. The
AAE was formerly known as the Black Coaches and Administrators (BCA), which, similar to TIDES’s report cards, published its own hiring report cards annually starting in 2004 (Harrison & Yee, 2009).

According to the last BCA Hiring Report Card, published in 2012, there were 546 head football coach openings at FBS schools between 1982 and 2011, and in those 29 years, a total of only 50 Black coaches (9.2%) were hired (Lapchick, Anjorin, & Nickerson, 2012). Former BCA Executive Director, Floyd Keith, maintains the organization’s Hiring Report Cards “had a significant and lasting influence on this historic breakthrough” (Lapchick et al., 2012, p. 6) experienced by minority coaches in regards to obtaining employment as the head coach of college football programs. Keith used the following facts to validate his opinion: 1) In the nine years since the publication of the first BCA Football Hiring Report Card, 61% of all the minority football coaches ever hired on the FBS level were hired; 2) From 2007–2012, 52% of the minority head coach appointments occurred; and 3) From the 2003 football season, since the first 2004 BCA report card, there had been a 600% increase in the number of Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) head football coaches of color from 3 to an all-time high of 18 at the start of 2012 season (Lapchick et al., 2012).

Echoing Keith’s sentiment is current University of Michigan Director of Athletics Warde Manuel who stated that the BCA Hiring Report Cards helped to open the hiring process for head coaching positions in football because institutions knew their hiring process would be evaluated through the use of known criteria that were shared with everyone in collegiate athletics (Harrison & Yee, 2009; Singer, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2010). Finally, it should be noted that the number of minority hires started to decline in the final years of the Hiring Report Cards. The 2011–2012 Division I football hiring cycle provided 39 searches, which was the highest number of openings
since the BCA hiring report card had been instituted. However, only 6 of the 39 appointments (15%) were minority coaches compared with the 35% of minority hires for the 2010–2011 season (Lapchick et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, Black coaches no longer have organizations like the BCA, protections, or rules in place that assist them in having an equal opportunity to obtain leadership positions within college sport. Even if they did, Saunders’ (2017) finding that the majority of athletic departments lack written policies and guidelines for hiring a new football coach would make evaluation of the process difficult. The National Association for Coaching Equity and Development recently suggested that schools adopt the Eddie Robinson Rule, which would require universities to interview at least one, preferably more than one, qualified racial and ethnic minority candidate in their final candidate pool for open head coaching and executive administrative positions (Medcalf, 2016). Saunders’ (2017) research revealed that an overwhelming percentage (94.12%) of Power 5 FBS programs do not have a written policy that requires at least one minority candidate to be interviewed for a head coaching position; though most athletic directors did interview at least one minority candidate. The rule is not a mandated National Collegiate Athlete Association (NCAA) law, although the organization has encouraged its member institutions to join, with more than 180 university presidents and chancellors and 35 conference commissioners having agreed to adhere to it (New, 2016). Whether or not the pledge by these universities to diversify their hiring pools has led to change is a question recently asked by Congress (Medcalf, 2017). Providing the opportunity for minorities to interview for coaching opportunities is a step in the right direction, but does not solve the racial inequality issues that minorities experience once they obtain employment.
In addition to ensuring that the hiring process is not influenced by racial biases, it is important to investigate whether a racial bias exists in the firing of college football coaches. According to Kopkin (2014), if decision-makers are discriminating against Black head coaches when deciding whether to retain them, these racial attitudes are most likely present in their hiring decisions as well. It is important to assess the racial composition of the hiring committee and decision makers because the demographic makeup of the search committee, particularly the racial diversity of committee members, is an integral aspect of understanding and analyzing the head coach hiring process in college football (Singer, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2010). Interestingly, it is actually to an athletic department’s benefit to be demographically diverse and to create hiring committees and programs that promote diversity aims and initiatives, as Cunningham (2008) noted that collegiate athletic departments that are demographically diverse and whose membership is strongly committed to diversity tend to realize more positive outcomes. Green (2010) remarked that valuing and fostering a diverse workforce is a sensible financial decision, with McGowan and Licina (2008) adding that “companies that embrace inclusion have demonstrated positive results such as increased innovation, greater employee engagement and higher levels of employee satisfaction” (p. 8). These aforementioned organizational benchmarks support the need for diversity workforces, which likely occurs when an organization includes diverse individuals in the hiring process.

In addition to observing and reporting that Black coaches are not being given head coaching opportunities, efforts should be made to ensure that those who are getting opportunities to become head coaches at the collegiate level are given a fair amount of time to succeed. This is important because it allows for coaches to implement their coaching schemes and philosophies while also trying to change the culture, if they inherited a losing culture, of a program to one that
reflects how they want the program to look and that resembles their ideals (Frankovelgia, 2010; Vannini, 2015).

Turick and Bopp (2016) noted that the amount of time afforded to head coaches is subjective as it is the prerogative of individual institutions, and coaches sometimes voluntarily leave their posts to assume new roles. They reported that a total of 265 head coaching hires of White and Black coaches occurred from 2003–2015 with the average coaching tenure lasting slightly over four years. From a different perspective, coaches likely understand best how much time is needed to implement change at an institution, so, to that end, San Diego State head football coach Rocky Long stated, “Now, the (schools) hire new coaches, they expect you to fix it (the program) in a day. You don’t fix programs in a day. It takes you six, seven years to fix a program. That’s my belief. …” (Vannini, 2015, para. 7). Essentially, it can be argued that a coach deserves at least 4 years (industry norm as identified by Turick and Bopp, 2016), and potentially as many as 7 years (practitioner view from coaches as Vannini, 2015 noted), to succeed at an institution.

**Problem Statement**

The lack of Black head and assistant coaches in college football provides evidence that social change needs to occur. Melton (2015) stated that “instances of social injustice are commonplace in college sport and negatively affect athletes, coaches, administrators and staff” (p. 2). Fostering social change can be accomplished through creating perspective-altering experiences that allow people (e.g., athletic decision makers) to understand the effects of social injustice. The fact that Black student-athletes do not see a representative number of Black coaches may hinder their belief that a coaching career is realistic for them. This statement is supported by Kamphoff and Gill’s (2008) finding that minority athletes were more likely than White athletes to agree that coaches are treated differently in sport based on their race/ethnicity.
They also discussed how the extremely low number of racial minority men and women in leadership positions in sport leads to a lack of role models and support groups for racial minorities, which is why many minority athletes hoped to get into coaching and open doors for other minorities interested in the profession. Additionally, this potential hindrance in career coaching aspirations could perpetuate the continued trend of Black assistant coaches being tasked with the role of “recruiter” or “relatable coach”; positions that require more time and effort to progress through the coaching ranks (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010). Day (2015) found support for this when his research revealed that Black coaches, relative to their White counterparts, are harmed by their disproportionate placement into jobs that inhibit mobility (i.e., non-central positions); roles that are not involved in decision-making.

The underrepresentation of Black head and assistant coaches in college football has been a popular area of research. Cunningham and Sagas (2005) opined that there is evidence of an “Old Boys Club” that serves as an access discrimination barrier. In addition, media influences (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010), booster influences (Hughes & Wright, 2003), and racial biases (Wong, 2002) have been offered as possible explanations for the discrepancy. Cunningham and Sagas (2005) studied the practice of homologous reproduction—hiring individuals that maintain similar surface-level characteristics—to explain negative impacts on the access of Black coaches into the coaching field, finding same-race hiring practices to be prevalent in intercollegiate athletics. They claim that with regards to advantageous social networks, rather than following the adage “who you know”, it might be better said “who you know who is racially similar” (p. 157). Homologous reproduction might manifest in this case such that athletic administrators are still predominately White men, and thus, more likely to hire individuals who are also White men; especially considering social networks. Cox, Rivera, and Jones (2016) reported that over 90
percent of the average White Americans closest friends and family members are White and just 1 percent are Black, which provides support for the belief that Whites may not have many Black contacts that they will reach out to when jobs open. For those Black coaches that are hired onto predominately White staffs, they may have negative experiences and gradually cease viewing coaching as a primary career goal (Cunningham, Sagas, & Ashley, 2001) before transitioning out of the profession.

Anecdotally, when a team has an opening at the head coach position they traditionally fill the vacancy with a winning coach from a lower/equal program, a previously successful unemployed former head coach, or a successful coordinator. Internet websites and social media platforms are usually abuzz with lists of coaches they believe to be solid candidates for the open positions. Although many administrators are now using search firms to fill coach openings, it is fair to assume that administrators are cognizant of what those in the media are saying about perspective coaching candidates (Smith, 2012). Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2013) described how consultants are often used by organizations to aide in the recruitment and vetting of prospective job candidates, with Saunders (2017) finding that external search firms are valuable in college sport hiring processes when used to “assist” and support Athletic Directors. Additionally, Saunders’ research revealed that the majority of athletic directors believe they/their peers should have a “short list” of potential candidates, which means several prospective candidates may already be under consideration prior to the beginning of any coaching search. These lists are likely influenced by several factors, one of which would be the media. Cunningham and Bopp (2010) studied the way in which the media discussed new coaching hires and found that the media generally portrays White coaches as being more knowledgeable about the strategy of the game than their Black counterparts, while Black coaches were viewed as solid recruiters that can
relate well with potential and current student-athletes. Should this sentiment still hold true today, it would serve as an indicator that the sad reality of the collegiate sport industry is that Black coaches are not viewed as solid game planners or signal callers. Rather, as Biernat and Kobrynnowicz (1997) suggest, administrators might set lower minimum standards for Black applicants, thereby requiring more evidence to document their ability or competency to successfully being hired into a managerial role.

Similarly, boosters and other athletic program supporters might let it be known whom they believe the next head coach should be. While their input might not be used, the impact of outside stakeholders (e.g., alumni, boosters, fans, etc.) should not be disregarded, as the hiring of Black head coaches is not solely dependent upon playing/coaching history and social networks. At the college level of play, some schools might fear that a Black head coach would potentially damage future contributions and support (Wong, 2002). A recent case study that depicts booster bias against a Black head coaching hire occurred in 2014 at the University of Texas. The program hired Charlie Strong, a Black man, to serve as the head coach of their football team, which was not well-received by longtime booster Red McCombs. McCombs commented that Strong (37–15 as a head coach at the University of Louisville) would make a great position coach or coordinator, but that he did not belong at one of the three most powerful university programs in the world (Olson, 2014). Saunders’ (2017) research revealed that over one-half of the Athletic Directors that had conducted a coaching search included stakeholders from outside of the Athletic Department in the hiring process, thus showing how influential booster voices can be in a search.

Despite the attention paid by the media and scholars to the underrepresentation of Black head and assistant coaches in college football, there is a lack of qualitative research aimed at
explaining the lived experiences of those men. Additionally, the use of an applied sociological approach, in which research results are disseminated amongst the people that stand to benefit most, has been virtually non-existent within this area. A study that aims to allow Black coaches to discuss their place on college football coaching staffs and engage with the research describing their underrepresentation within the sport is needed, as their criticisms might assist in identifying important future areas of inquiry.

The current study seeks to advance literature on the racialized discrimination present in the hiring and experiences of Black college football coaches by providing Black coaches an opportunity to discuss their lived experiences within college football, comment on the literature aimed at explaining the discrepancy in minority head and assistant coaches, and offer suggestions for future research studies and/or reform within college football. Results will contribute to sport management by adding the voices of this underrepresented group and allowing their views to direct future research studies. Essentially, this study aims to bring the results of past research on racial inequality in college football to the participants. Singer (2005) noted that minorities are holders and creators of knowledge, thus there is value in asking for them to critique the body of literature that exists explaining their experiences. The minority coaches that will be interviewed in this study will be encouraged to 1) reflect on the sport management literature investigating race discrimination in college football coaching that attempts to explain their underrepresentation within that space, 2) highlight the knowledge gaps in scholarly theories and thought processes, and 3) suggest new questions that sport management researchers should strive to address moving forward.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate Black college football coaches’ experiences of working in the White dominate intercollegiate sport space. By affording Black coaches an
opportunity to discuss their lived experiences and critique the body of research that purportedly sheds light on their place in the coaching profession, this study has the potential to inform scholars on the day-to-day barriers, concerns, and obstacles faced by Black coaches in college football, as well as highlight what issues these men have observed that should be the focus of future research studies.

To that end, the purpose of this study is multifaceted in that I (a) explored the lived experiences of Black assistant football coaches in a profession where they are a marginalized group, (b) determined whether Black college football assistant coaches feel they are tasked with responsibilities that are different than their White counterparts, (c) provided Black football coaches with an opportunity to comment on the sport management literature that attempts to explain the discrepancy in coaching hires, and (d) allowed Black coaches to suggest what issues need to be addressed by future researchers if positive social change is to be realized. It is important to understand minority perceptions of being tasked, treated, or viewed differently, and not attributing it to them “seeing prejudice where it does not exist” (Dovidio, 1997, p. 60), as Whites who attempt to rationalize the current racial disparities in college football coaching hiring and dismissals as the result of nonracial dynamics are using a color-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

Much of what is known about the experience of Black coaches is based on quantitative survey research studies; which reveal that Black coaches tend to encounter more discrimination and prejudice in the college football coaching profession. To that end, this research investigates whether coaches are aware of the racial inequalities that exist and, if they are, the impact that this has on how they see themselves in the profession. Furthermore, another limitation of the current research in this area that will be addressed is in regards to the lack of applied research being
utilized by sport sociologist when studying Black college football coaches in intercollegiate athletic departments. Yiannakis (1989) and Chalip (2015) have both advocated for an applied sociology of sport in which researchers bring knowledge to those who need it and disseminate it accordingly. Minorities are creators and holders of knowledge (Singer, 2005), which means the research that has been produced in sport management and sport sociology should be brought to them for critique. They may be able to identify gaps in our thinking, or suggest questions that will serve as the focal point(s) for future research studies. Whether or not Black coaches are aware of the body of literature that exists attempting to explain their lived experiences is unknown. Based on Irwin and Ryan’s (2013) critique of sport management scholarship suffering from a practitioner-researcher divide, in which academics produce research that is read only by other academics, it may be safe to assume that Black coaches are unaware of the research on racial inequality that has been published in the sport management and sociology of sport literatures.

It is important to consider the impact that this phenomenon has on Black student-athletes. The lack of Black coaches may affect the career planning and mentorship of young Black athletes, which account for 55.9% of DI-FBS players (Lapchick et al, 2018). Singer (2009) interviewed Black student-athletes and found that those individuals wished they had more Black coaching mentors. Similarly, Cooper and Hawkins (2014) discussed the need for role models if more Black individuals are going to successfully transition to college and post-college success. The lack of Black coaches to serve as role models or mentors to Black athletes, combined with the fact that only three Black head coaches have ever been rehired to the same position after being fired, may suggest to Black student-athletes that their institutions do not value Black men as leaders and that if they are fortunate to one-day get a coaching job that they may not receive a
lot of support or a second opportunity. Additionally, the purpose of this study adheres to the challenges posed by past Earle F. Zeigler Award winners – an annual award presented by the North American Society for Sport Management to an individual that has made a significant contribution to the field of sport management – that sport management researchers should conduct critical research that investigates the good, the bad, and the ugly of sport (Frisby, 2005), and that attempts to ensure that sport promotes equality, inclusion, and opportunities for all (Cunningham, 2014). This study addresses those challenges through examining inequality and discrimination in the college football coaching profession.

The sports field would greatly benefit from increased critical analysis and discourses regarding race in sport. Carrington (2013) stated that “the best work on race and sport will continue to emerge from the subfield of sport studies” (p. 379). Agyemang and DeLorme (2010) recommend that sport scholars continue to research and understand White privilege, promote diversity initiatives, and caution minorities from entering into poor situations, and Birrell (1989) challenged sport scholars with similar charges to examine Black cultural resistance in sport, examine in what ways sport was used to consolidate White privilege, examine race with intersectional identities, and attempt to determine how exploitation is produced and legitimized. Following the challenges and recommendations of these authors would allow sport scholars to improve the integration and socialization processes of sport, empower athletes to be activist for positive social change, and work towards dismantling the practices and systems that establish and maintain racial inequality in sport.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Race refers to “a population of people who are believed to be naturally or biologically distinct from other populations” (Coakley, 2015b, p. 226), and ethnicity refers to “a cultural heritage that people use to identify a particular population” (Coakley, 2015b, p. 226). Nkomo (1992) noted that “race” has become synonymous with other groups, as Whites are viewed as not having a “race”. Additionally, Whiteness has been positioned as the optimal status criterion in our society (Singer, 2005). Thus, Non-Whites are situated in minority groups that possess relatively little power, are viewed as different/”Others”, face negative stereotypes, and are singled out for discrimination (Eitzen, 2015). Additionally, Sachdev and Bourhis (1987) found that high status group members discriminate so as to maintain their positive social identities. To that end, Harris (1993) argued that Whiteness is more than just a racial identity as it has evolved into a form of property that is protected by White individuals and sought by minority groups, which leads to discriminatory behavior.

In the context of sport, People of Color experience similar obstacles that they might experience in mainstream society, such as limited access to certain activities, limited access to management and ownership positions, limited career advancement opportunities, and less rewards for equal effort (Beamon & Messner, 2014; Coakley, 2015b; Eitzen, 2015; Hartmann, 2000). Thus, one might expect sport organizations to make improving racial inequality a priority, since organization that embrace diversity tend to experience more positive outcomes (Cunningham, 2008), but, at least at the collegiate level, Bimper and Harrison (2015) found that while “most mission statements claim to promote respect for others, their strategic discourse disrespects an important aspect of the Black stakeholders’ identity by not acknowledging their lived realities, experiences, culture, contributions or concerns” (p. 10). The institution of sport is
a space that is dominated by Whites and structures are in place, at the macro, meso, and micro
levels (Cunningham, 2010) to maintain the White race as the optimal status quo.

**Sport in American Society**

Sports give Black and White individuals an opportunity to interact with one another which helps break down racial barriers/walls or cultural/racial differences by allowing people to become aware of and better understand similarities and differences. The opportunity for Black and White individuals to interact through sport, or have intergroup contact, can lead to positive effects. Allport’s (1954) intergroup contact hypothesis held that positive effects of intergroup contact occur in situations marked by four key conditions: having shared or common goals, maintaining equal group status within the situation, engaging in intergroup cooperation, and obtaining the support of authorities, law, or custom.

As noted by Chu and Griffey (1985), the emphasis in sport on winning often helps provide a common goal that can supersede racial differences. Additionally, accomplishing the common goal of winning requires intergroup cooperation, as each member of the organization must adequately fulfill their responsibilities. As members of the same team, individuals may believe that equal status exists amongst teammates regardless of race. Lastly, intergroup contact in sport is encouraged and supported by oversight bodies. These sport experiences are important for young individuals as high school athletes expressed greater interest than their non-athlete counterparts in having more friends of other races, but were also more likely to view one race as more competent than another (Chu & Griffey, 1985).

Sigelman and Welch (1993) found that interracial friendships decrease Blacks’ perceptions of racial hostility, which helps them feel more “welcome” in typically White sport spaces. Discussions surrounding the welcomeness of minorities in certain spaces align with Wilder’s (1986) contact hypothesis theory which suggests that contact between individuals from
different groups will reduce prejudice between the diverse groups. Unfortunately, despite the interracial and interethnic opportunities created through sport, racial and ethnic prejudicial issues have long ‘plagued’ the institution of sport, as demonstrated by the storied histories of racial and ethnic discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, and prejudice targeted toward People of Color (Edwards, 2010).

In alignment with Edwards’s view of sport, Hartmann (2000) challenged sport scholars to view sport as a “contested racial terrain”, or as a social site where racial ideologies, images, and inequalities are constructed, transformed, and constantly struggled over. Singer (2005) extended a similar call to scholars studying sport when he asked researchers to consider using race-based epistemologies. Using a critical paradigm, as advocated by Hartmann (2000) and Singer (2005), requires challenging the functionalist-evolutionary paradigmatic view of sport. The functionalist-evolutionary paradigmatic view of sport sees it as being “removed from wider society – sport and politics don’t mix - and that any latent racism that exists within sport is dissipated through interracial contact on the playing fields and sport’s own inner logic of fair play and unequivocal meritocracy” (Carrington, 2013, p. 384). Since sport is a field in which Black athletes and coaches are prominently featured and promoted, it is often viewed as a site where People of Color can achieve social mobility and earn generational wealth (Eitzen, 2015). Stated another way, many Americans view sports as a way for minorities to escape the ghetto (Hartmann, 2000) and create a better life for themselves and their families. Coakley (2015a) described the aforementioned viewpoint as the Great Sport Myth (GSM). He argued that the GSM has shaped uncountable decisions to embrace and sponsor sports despite their costs and what they may preclude in the way of other private and public choices. The two tenets of the GSM are 1) the purity and goodness of sport is transmitted to those who participate in or consume it, and 2) sport
inevitably leads to individual and community development. To that end, he remarked that the GSM has led people worldwide to conclude that there is no need to critically study and analyze sport, because it is fair and already structured as it should be. This view runs counter to Smith and Hattery’s (2011) observation that “although sport has been deemed a model of diversity...there is a serious disconnect between perceptions of this diversity and the reality that defines the lack of racial diversity in the management (i.e., coaching and leadership) of sport” (p. 107).

However, it is important to consider how class ideology and color-blind racism impact views on sport in American society. According to Coakley (2015b), class ideology in the United States is based on believing in the American Dream and the idea that the U.S. is a meritocracy. The American Dream is essentially the belief that “you can be whatever you want to be”, and a meritocratic society rewards those who have ability and work hard. Sport is commonly discussed as a meritocratic space where those individuals that practice, work hard and put in the most effort are rewarded with playing time, coaching opportunities, and administrative advancement. Eitzen (2015) remarked that oppressed people – which he lists as racial minorities, individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds, non-heterosexuals, and women – receive false hope through sport that their efforts and time investments will be rewarded.

The fact that sport is not a meritocratic space, with certain dominant identities tending to receive more opportunities than others, was reflected in Sorek and White’s (2016) analysis of the relationship between national pride and football. They stated that “symbols of American national pride, which are so visible in the football sphere, allows White fans to experience congruence between their national sentiments and the fandom experience” (p. 275). The recent kneeling of players in the National Football League represents an example of football being linked with
national pride (Witz, 2016), as athletes used the pregame national anthem as an opportunity to express their discontent with the treatment of Black people in American society. Sorek and White found that being a fan of football increased national pride in Whites (increase of 10%), however it had the opposite effect for Blacks (11% decrease). The racial inequality present within sports likely cause Blacks individuals to experience a completely different game than their White counterparts. The nationalism and patriotism celebrated and promoted by football is rooted in Whiteness, thus Black individuals may develop a disdain towards a sport space so strongly aligned with a nation in which they face prejudice and discrimination.

This difference in experience and processing of the game might be attributed to the use of color-blind racism on the part of Whites. Color-blindness involves the rationalizing of contemporary racial inequality as the result of nonracial dynamics (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). An individual that ascribes to a color-blind ideology would argue that those who are rewarded have earned what they get, and all others just need to work harder. It involves a mentality that success if based on merit and that failure is the result of a lack of effort. This viewpoint fails to recognize the inequities that exist between people of marginalized groups or those lacking social and economic resources. Furthermore, they may view any progress as a sign that previous racial inequality no longer exists. For example, Buffington (2005), in an analysis of media articles that discussed the emergence of Black quarterbacks in the National Football League, found that the majority (30 of 44; 68.1%) of authors used this development to declare an end/near end of race as a factor impeding People of Color from playing the quarterback position. However, it is important to remember that “there are no final victories” (Edwards, 2016, p. 4) in the fight against racism and discrimination, so examinations of quarterback play –and sport in general – should continue to be investigated to potentially discover new forms of racial inequality (see
racial tasking of college quarterbacks; Bopp & Sagas, 2014). Building of the emergence of Black QBs and Edwards’s statement, one example that shows why the fight continues is because despite an increase of Black players in central positions such as quarterback, minority athletes still tend to predominately play non-central positions. Racial inequality may occur because, as noted by Lapchick et al. (2018), the majority of power positions (e.g., university president, athletic director, faculty athletic representative, and conference commissioners) in intercollegiate athletics are held by White individuals, which helps maintain Whiteness as the dominant racial identity in that space.

**White Hegemony in Sport**

Hegemony is a form of dominance of one group over another that is achieved through coercion and consent (Anderson, 2017); this includes White over Non-White dynamics. Although dominance can be obtained by force, consent is required to help the dominant class maintain and secure their ideals (Omi & Winant, 1994). Dominant groups can obtain consent through making ‘concessions’ or ‘sacrifices’ that appease subordinated groups (Anderson, 2017), or by maintaining “a popular system of ideas and practices – through education, the media, religion, folk, wisdom, etc.” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 67). Hegemony is a very particular, historically specific, and temporary ‘moment’ in the life of a society (Hall, 1996), and is rooted in conflict theory. Whitson (1984) remarked that “no dominant culture ever successfully incorporates the full range of human purposes and practices, and hence hegemony cannot be equated with dominance, in any passive or established sense” (p. 69). Instead the prevailing hegemony, in this case Whiteness, must be continually defended, modified, recreated, and renewed (Williams, 1977). This process helps to ensure that minority groups do not grow stronger or obtain positions of power, which is potentially threatening to dominant high status groups (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991).
Eitzen (2015) described conflict as endemic to capitalist societies due to social class differences and the ways people are organized for production, distribution, and consumption of material goods. Conflict theorists argue that the wealthy and powerful, through their control of decision-making apparatuses, maintain their advantages by fostering ideological conformity – though it is sometimes achieved by coercion (Anderson, 2017) – through the government, economic system, schools, churches, and other social institutions. Additionally, Eitzen (2015) contends that from a conflict theory perspective society reflects the hegemony of the powerful and advantaged, and that sport at every level is organized in such a way in which subordinate or minority groups accept being ruled by the dominant groups (e.g. White over Black, men over women, heterosexual over non-heterosexual, etc.). Morgan (1994) suggested that the “hegemony sport theory” (p. 315) is one of the best macro-level factors to examine when discussing social domination, as it has explanatory power in showing why certain power dynamics persist.

Coakley (2015a) discussed the use of sport as a hegemonic tool when he stated, “It’s as if ruling elites had read Gramsci and concluded that sport, more than other civil institutions today, appeals to popular tastes in ways that make people gullible and subject to political manipulation and control” (p. 403). To that end, it is noteworthy that the White racial group has historically been the dominant group in sport (Edwards, 2010).

According to Schaefer (2009), “race is a social construction, and this process benefits the oppressor, who defines who is privileged and who is not” (p. 16). The oppressors within sport, or the dominant, privileged, and/or race group, are Whites. Collins (2001) argued that Whites advocate for the continued dominance of the standard cultural status quo; English-speaking, Euro-centric, White nationalism, masculine authority, etc. White males have dominated the production of knowledge, and have subsequently made their values and concerns dominant and
privileged (Nkomo, 1992). This continued status quo affords certain assumptions, benefits, and privileges to individuals that identify as White – which Harris (1993) termed as White privilege – thus Whites will do whatever is necessary to protect their privileges against minority groups as they do not view them as rightful competitors (Fenton, 2010). The fear that privileges need to be protected increases as members in minority groups expand. In Blalock’s (1967) theory of minority-group relations, he argues that the size of a minority group will impact its perceived threat to the dominant group; with larger groups being viewed as more threatening than smaller groups. Members of high status groups, in this case White individuals, tend to be more discriminatory and less parity-oriented (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991).

The dominance of Whiteness in sport occurs through maintaining White privilege in leadership positions, the perpetuation of negative stereotypes, and racial segregation. Additionally, as Bourdieu (1998) discussed, many of the individuals that follow sport are so focused on the outcomes (e.g. scores, stats, and tactics) that they fail to consider the sociological impact that sport has on society. Thus, those individuals would be unlikely to critically research sport, and subsequently challenge any of the inequalities that exist within sport. Extending beyond sport management research, Carrington (2013) noted that sport remains neglected within mainstream sociology research and has been marginalized by the American Sociological Association, making it doubtful that investigations into racial inequality will come from the “mother field” or home discipline of sport sociology. One reason that may account for the lack of race research may be the ideological shift in cultural studies that occurred in the 1990s, as the turn to critical cultural studies created methodological division amongst researchers (Markula, 2015). Furthermore, in the organizational studies field, most of the research analyzes organizations as homogeneous entities with little attention given to race (Nkomo, 1992). This
occurs even though race has been present all along in organizations, even if silenced or suppressed. This may be why Hartmann (1996) mentioned the need for research involving culture, identity, and popular culture in the study of race and ethnicity.

Regarding racial inequality at leadership positions in college sport, the institution of college athletics has historically devalued Black coaches’ capacity to guide a team (Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010; Cunningham & Bopp, 2010), while at the same time afforded special consideration to Whiteness. Agyemang and DeLorme (2010) used social dominance theory (SDT) to explain and understand the hierarchical group-based structures that exist in college sport which impede People of Color from obtaining leadership positions. They discussed how SDT creates a “caste system” that functions similarly to those found globally by assigning value to the pigmentation of one’s skin; with lighter skinned individuals receiving more value. Since Whites tend to possess more social and economic capital, they can dominate other groups because “with economic surplus comes power and with power comes control” (Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010, p. 43). This separation into different castes may not appear unusual to most, as Nkomo (1992) argues “racial and ethnic stratification are viewed as an almost permanent and inevitable part of human society” (p. 495). A cursory perusal of athletic team rosters at the collegiate and professional levels show that sports may be racially stratified, as anecdotal evidence suggests race may be an important factor in determining the sport(s) in which an individual may participate. Outside of participation, leadership positions are overwhelmingly held by White individuals in college sport (Lapchick et al., 2018). For those that do coach, Sagas and Cunningham (2005) found, in comparison to their White counterparts, that Black coaches had lower career satisfaction, received fewer promotions, and were more likely to be placed into periphery positions.
The lack of minorities in leadership positions privileges Whiteness while presenting access issues to minorities that are attempting to break into sport. The fact that the race of most assistants on a head coaches staff in football (Bopp & Sagas, 2012) and basketball (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005) depends on the race of that program’s head coach shows that homologous reproduction, or individuals hiring others that are the same or like them, is present in sport. McDonald and Day (2010) discussed how Whites may engage in network-based social closure, which is an indirect, and often times unintentional, discrimination process that results in Whites showing a preference for hiring, referring, and providing information to only those members that are a part of their network, which homologous reproduction shows are most likely other Whites. Similarly, research shows that job applicants receive significantly higher ratings from evaluators of their own race (Nkomo, 1992), and that minority applicants believed to possess a strong racial identity are rated as a poorer fit for jobs when compared to minority applicants that do not have as strong or salient racial identity (Steward & Cunningham, 2015). Thus, White hegemonic rule can be maintained through the hiring of minorities with weak racial identities that are unlikely to question the status quo.

The negative stereotypes regarding the intelligence of Black athletes (Buffington, 2005) and coaches (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010) typically leads to them being placed or “stacked” into certain non-central positions (Sack, Singh, & Thiel, 2005), as central positions are typically reserved for Whites. Furthermore, minorities may receive different job assignments and occupational sponsorship opportunities than their White counterparts, which would be an example of treatment discrimination (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005). It should be noted that previous scholars (see Maume, 2009b; Wilson, 2012) have remarked that research on inequality often faces issues stemming from the lack of minorities in leadership roles. For example, with
less than 10 percent of head coaches in college football being Black, group comparisons can be
difficult. Thus, there is a need for continued investigations into developing racial equality within
sport organizations. These investigations are important because racial inequality still exists,
which clashes with those that may view sport as a meritocratic space where racial issues do not
exist. It is important to apply a critical lens to the interracial and interethnic opportunities and
situations that are created through sport interactions and in sport spaces, since those integration
opportunities and situations create an environment with the potential to lead to positive social
change in sport (Welty Peachey, 2015).

Racial Integration in Sport

Sport represents a space in which minorities have the potential to be assimilated into the
dominant cultural or ethnic paradigm. Additionally, people tend to move into groups which hold
opinions that agree with their own and enable to satisfy their drive for self-evaluation (Festinger,
1954). Thus, moving, or assimilating, into a group that has high status would be preferable to
low status members, which in this case would include marginalized racial minorities.

Assimilation within the ethnic paradigm has the potential to lead to "blame-the-victim"
explanations of why certain groups have not been assimilated as successfully as other groups
(Nkomo, 1992). Minorities, using a functionalist perspective, are socialized through sport to
adopt the appropriate behaviors and cultural attitudes, and failure to do so typically reflects on
the groups and not the dominant society’s unfair request for assimilation. The functionalist
perspective sees all the institutions in a society, which includes sport, as being vital to the
promotion and maintenance of the desired social norms and values (Eitzen, 2015). Thus, the
values and norms conveyed in sport – which include learning to respect those in authoritative
positions (e.g. coaches and officials) and following the rules on a contest – socializes individuals
to respect those who have power and not question the status quo, as doing so would upset the
stability present in society. In American society, where different hegemonic dynamics exist (e.g. Whites over Blacks, men over women, rich over poor, heterosexuals over non-heterosexuals, Christian over non-Christian), the functionalist perspective promotes the status quo by impeding critical examination of power structures that maintain and reinforce the dominant groups ideology.

Beamon and Messer (2014) stated that “sport participation has been positive for Blacks and for American society by both aiding integration and providing opportunities, such as college scholarships, social mobility, etc. that may not have been available in other avenues” (p. 181). Regarding sport as an integrated space where Blacks and Whites interact, many African Americans may select leisure activities based on the “Blackness” or “Whiteness” associated with the activity. For example, Goldsmith (2003) found, in interscholastic sports, that different sports have been labeled as “Black” sports (e.g. basketball & football) or “White” sports (e.g. baseball & soccer) based on the participation rates of racial groups in those sports. This separation of races by sport should be obvious to practitioners, but often goes unnoticed due to the dominance of associating participation behavior with cultural identity rather than as the result of discrimination (Philipp, 1994). Additionally, regarding social mobility (Beamon & Messner, 2014), it is important to remember that prioritizing sport over other occupations that hold far greater promise of attainment can severely impede the economic and social mobility of People of Color (Edwards, 2000; Harrison, 2000). Interestingly, Beamon and Messner (2014) noted that “it is statistically more likely for an African-American male to become a neurosurgeon than to play in the NBA” (p. 183). Unfortunately, Black males, in comparison to their White counterparts, are encouraged and socialized by their communities and families into participating in sports, despite
the existence of more viable and still financially lucratively opportunities that exist for those young men.

Coakley (2015b) stated that sports are cultural sites where ideas and beliefs regarding minorities are shaped and re-shaped. Thus, sport is a fluid field where racial and ethnic relations can be improved or changed. Fanon (2008) remarked that “White men consider themselves superior to Black men…Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, and the equal value of their intellect” (p. 3). In their attempts to prove themselves, Carter’s (1993) remark that “Our parents' advice was true: We [the Black community] really do have to work twice as hard to be considered half as good [as Whites]” (p. 58). The bringing together of Whites and Blacks in sport presents an opportunity for minorities to change elitist notions and views that some Whites may possess, while also giving minorities an opportunity to present themselves as equals. This change is possible because sport has the power to “inform our Academe, empower our students, and inspire our athletes, fans, and community partners toward racial and ethnic inclusivity, racial and ethnic sensitivity, and racial and ethnic justice” (Armstrong, 2011, p. 104). Thus, the interracial and inter-ethnic integration that is facilitated through sport makes it a rare perfect site for the cultivation and development of diverse relationships and intellectual growth to occur through the sharing of ideas and breaking down of barriers.

The power that comes from using sport as a space where White elitist notions are challenged (Fanon, 2008), cultural change or resistance is combated (Coakley, 2015b), and individuals are empowered to advocate for positive social change (Armstrong, 2011), makes it a perfect site for protesting the stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors encountered by People of Color in society.
Social Advocacy in Sport

Hartmann (2000) argued that academics have been too quick to dismiss discussions of how racial resistance and change occurs in sport. Similarly, Carrington (1998) stated that “sport can provide a modality through which Black cultural resistance to racism can be achieved” (p. 290). This cultural and racial resistance occurs when minority groups are provided with opportunities to compete against majority groups, or use their status as athletes to be advocates for positive social change. The opportunity for Black bodies to compete against White bodies has meaning(s) that extend beyond sport competitions. Messner (1992) described this occurrence as a contested power situation. In addition to resisting racism, sport serves as a space where racial minorities can bring social inequalities to the public’s attention (Hartmann, 1996). Society affords coaches and athletes celebrity status, thus giving them an opportunity to have their views and opinions heard by a large audience.

The social ills of the 1960s and 1970s inspired individuals in sport to use their popularity to speak out against instances of social injustice (Candaele & Dreir, 2004). The Black Power demonstration at the 1968 Olympic Games and the advocacy of Muhammad Ali represented the first-time Black athletes decided not to be “politically neutered”, and instead called attention to race inequality (Hoberman, 1997). Regarding Muhammad Ali, in the 1960s the Black fighter was seen as a symbol for what it meant to be a Black American (Hoberman, 1997), so his pride in being a Black man and advocating for social justice was viewed as an inspiration to many. Several African-Americans in sport ended up playing an important role as activists during the Civil Rights Movement (Agyemang, Singer & DeLorme, 2010); serving as outspoken critics of social inequality in a variety areas. Athlete activism declined in the 1980s/1990s, which Cunningham and Regan (2012) have attributed to the fact that social ills of that time were less prevalent than in the 1960s/1970s (where racism may have been more overt than in the present),
athletes were too focused on athletics only, and a fear of jeopardizing sponsorships existed. The latter point was most exemplified by a Michael Jordan quote in which he said, “Republicans buy sneakers too”, when confronted during his career about his lack of political involvement (Glass, 2009).

However, Edwards (2016) believes athlete activism is on the rise. He highlighted the 2010 Phoenix Suns – “Los Suns” protest in which the team wore jerseys with a message that conveyed they did not support racist immigration laws in Arizona; 2012 Miami Heat – Donning Hoodies after the Trayvon Martin shooting; 2013 Grambling Football – A week-long protest by the football players to advocate for facility improvements; 2014 LA Clippers – Players threatened not to play after team owner Donald Sterling was overheard on an audio recording making racist remarks; 2014 LA Lakers – “I Can’t Breathe” t-shirts in the aftermath of Eric Garner’s death; 2014 St. Louis Rams – “Hands up, don’t shoot” in response to the Ferguson, Missouri protests; 2015 Northwestern Football – Unionization attempt by the players; and the 2015 Oklahoma Football – Involvement in supporting other student groups that requested a racist fraternity be removed from campus, as recent examples of athletes using sport as a platform to advocate for positive social change.

Sport not only serves as a platform to advocate for equality within sport, it can transform the lives of an entire minority community. Carrington (1998) analyzed a cricket club and found that the team served as space of cultural resistance, represented a symbolic marker of the Black community’s identity, and served as an arena to show masculine and racial pride. As a space of cultural resistance, the cricket team provided Black men with an environment to be their authentic selves, where they were able to find Black pride, as well as a sense of safety and security amongst similar individuals. Fanon (2008) discussed how Black men have two
dimensions; one with his fellow Black members, and the other with the White man. The concept of having two dimensions was previously discussed by DuBois (1903) when he used the term ‘double consciousness’ to describe the “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (p. 9). Sport serves as a space where Blacks feel they can express the former dimension instead of the latter. As a symbolic marker, the team’s successes were viewed as a positive reflection of the Black community. The strong attachment with the community made the athletes role models in the area. Despite their status as a minority group, the Black players saw cricket matches against Whites athletes and coaches as opportunities to cast aside any notions that they were inferior.

To that end, it is important that minorities are afforded opportunities to coach and compete with and against their White counterparts. Sport competitions create spaces where stereotypes and prejudicial assumptions can be challenged. As noted by Allport’s (1954) contact theory, interaction between individuals with differences tends to produce changes in attitudes. For Black coaches and players, competing and excelling in sport competitions against their White peers has the potential to alter narratives that exist regarding the abilities of Blacks to excel in sport spaces. Additionally, the interracial composition of athletic teams creates a setting in which Black successes are accomplished in conjunction with White colleagues. Thus, attitudes are shaped both within and outside of the team. It is important to note that, on interracial teams, that Blacks and Whites may not enjoy equal status (Allport, 1954). As Chu and Griffey (1985) stated:

“Because of the "stacking" phenomenon whereby Black players are too often assigned to peripheral non-central positions, there may be less interracial dependency on players than previously assumed. Positive support from authorities may similarly be less common in sport, particularly in environments that discourage interracial interaction off the playing field. Additionally, when winning is the superordinate goal, failure to win may lead to
scapegoating and a subsequent deterioration of racial attitudes and behaviors” (pp. 330-331).

In conclusion, if sport is to serve as a space for positive social change than efforts must be made to ensure that athletes and coaches are positioned in such a way that they all rely on one another to accomplish shared common goals (Allport, 1954). Additionally, team bonding and building must occur off the field. This might be accomplished through increased representation of Black individuals in coaching or playing positions, as it may inspire Black communities, since holding positions typically reserved for Whites can be viewed as a positive sign that progress is being made. Essentially, the successes of Black coaches and players has the potential to be transformational in terms of changing the perceptions of minorities in leadership positions outside of sport contexts.

**Black Coaches in College Football**

Cunningham’s (2010) multilevel analysis of the under-representation of African American coaches shows that sport scholars must consider this issue from multiple perspectives. At the macro level, institutional practices, political climate, and stakeholder expectations can create hardships for minority coaches. Regarding institutionalized practices, sport organizations are somewhat resistant to change and operate in accordance with the “it is the way we have always done it” philosophy. Thus, sport organizations may not view attitudes, habits, and practices that have become institutionalized within their departments as racist, or as creating barriers for minorities to obtain employment. Additionally, institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), which refers to the tendency of organization to model the dominant and successful organizations in their field, needs to be considered in this discussion. Since sport organizations are generally homogenous with their staffs are White, male, heterosexual, etc. (Fink, Pastore, & Reimer, 2001), any attempts to mirror successful organizations would not
necessarily lead to more diverse athletic departments. It would be beneficial to have a successful
sport organization that is known for, and actively attempts to incorporate, diversity within its
athletic department.

Cunningham (2010) also noted how the political climate of a country, or region, might
factor into the advancement of minority groups. A liberal or progressive society would likely
promote diversity objectives and social justice aims. Conversely, a conservative society may not
place a strong importance on diversity initiatives, and minority coaches might experience a
plateau or decline in hiring. This does not mean that strides towards equality are made only
under liberal regimes, and stunted during conservative ones. Instead, it just highlights that sport
may be susceptible to the same changes as the entire nation when it comes to varying political
viewpoints. This position was supported by Robinson’s (2009) observation that nearly half of the
head basketball and football coaches at the Ivy League institutions were Black; those schools are
located in the liberal-progressive part of America.

Lastly, stakeholder expectations were discussed as a barrier. Boosters to an athletic
department are valued by the organization, but they sometimes allow those individuals to have
too much of a say in hiring decisions (Wolverton, 2007). In an attempt to retain donors, schools
may hire individuals that they feel the donors can relate with and continue sponsoring. Lapchick
commented that he has had conversations with athlete department personnel in which they
expressed fear over losing donors if they hired a minority coach (Lapchick, Little, Lerner, &
Mathew, 2009). A few examples of stakeholder influences in hiring include Texas’s hire of
Charlie Strong and Auburn’s decision not to hire Turner Gill. Olson (2014) reported the Texas
booster Red McCombs did not support the decision to hire Charlie Strong; which likely created
an environment in which Strong lacked support. Charles Barkley, a former NBA player and
Auburn alum, was critical of his school’s decision to not hire Turner Gill – a Black man that had successfully turned around the University of Buffalo’s football program – claiming that Gill did not receive the job because the administration feared hiring a Black man (Schlabach, 2008).

At the meso level, Cunningham (2010) discussed how the prejudices that individuals hold toward minorities, leadership stereotypes, and organizational culture can create hardships for minority coaches. Prejudice refers to the psychological attitudes or beliefs individuals have towards other groups. Overt and aversive racism impact the prejudices individuals have towards minority coaches. Overt racism, or “old fashioned racism”, is blatant and observable racial prejudice. Aversive racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) involves individuals that do not believe they are racist and promote egalitarian notions of equality, but harbor negative subconscious views on minority groups. For example, Steward and Cunningham (2015) recently used prejudice-distribution theory to measure the impact of racial identity on job applicants. They found that Black individuals with a strong racial identity were rated less favorably than Black individuals with a weak racial identity.

The individuals that completed their questionnaire were most likely unaware of the subconscious views they had towards minority applicants and their subsequent preference to select minority applicants with weak racial identities, which is why “raters should be trained such that they are aware of the potential biases and are educated on steps to reduce them” (Steward & Cunningham, 2015, p. 253). Aversive racists are likely to select a Black candidate over a White candidate when the Black candidate is more qualified, but when both individuals have similar credentials they are more likely to choose the White candidate. Of importance, some individuals may be unaware of the biases they hold towards minorities because they claim to “not see race” or because those negative associations are implicit. Regarding the former, Bonilla-
Silva (2014) noted that most Whites assert they “don’t see any color, just people” (p. 1), which he discussed as inaccurate. Rather than claiming to “not see race”, individuals should be trained to reflect on how everyone sees race and responds accordingly. It is important to understand and reflect on any biases that we may or may not be aware of when it comes to working with different groups.

Implicit attitudes, or implicit associations, exist outside of the conscious awareness or control of individuals, and contribute to how people automatically respond to a situation or prompt (Karpinski & Hilton, 2001). Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz (1998) described these associations as being automatically activated without the individual’s awareness. Dijksterhuis (2004) defined conscious thought as “the cognitive and/or affective task-relevant processes one is consciously aware of while attending to a task”, whereas unconscious thought is “the cognitive and/or affective task-relevant processes that take place outside conscious awareness” (p. 586). For example, in conscious thought, an individual makes a decision between two options after considering the pros and cons of each, but in unconscious thought, an individual might suddenly arrive at a decision when they are not thinking about the options. Karpinski and Hilton (2001) found that implicit associations (unconscious thought) are independent from explicit attitudes (conscious thought). Thus, Whites, in both sport and general society, should be aware of the fact that they may have made decisions that were arrived at without going through a pros and cons thought process.

Greenwald et al. (1998) developed an Implicit Association Test (IAT) to measure implicit attitudes by examining the automatic associations between various attitude objects and evaluative attributes, or linking objects with associative words. Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler (2000) proposed that people form automatic attitudes towards objects the moment they encounter
them. The IAT can measure unconscious levels of ageism, gender bias, racism, and self-esteem. Previous research suggests, “IAT scores reflect the associations a person has been exposed to in his or her environment rather than the extent to which the person endorses those evaluative associations” (Karpinski & Hilton, 2001, p. 774). The environment may also influence scores or assessments provided by participants. For example, Dimofte (2010) discussed how poor comprehension of questions, the desire to give politically correct answers, and acquiescence, are methodological shortcomings of explicit testing; subsequently, implicit testing is free of those issues.

When considering race, it is important to note how prejudices and biases my influence initial associations. Leadership stereotypes, racial stereotypes/profiling, and past histories, all likely influence the initial association people may have regarding People of Color in those positions. Implicit association test assessments typically pit bi-polar targets or attributes against one another (Dimofte, 2010), so White vs. Black scenarios may cause participants to invoke that one is better. Baron and Banaji (2006) examined implicit attitudes towards social groups in children and found that participants had already developed implicit pro-White and anti-Black associations even at their young ages. The implicit test for 10-year olds, as well as for adults, was also consistent with the pro-White and anti-Black associations. Karpinski and Hilton (2001) highlighted, in studies involving prejudice, that participants may carefully monitor their decisions and explicit attitudes. Greenwald et al. (1998) actually used a race-based example of how IAT can reveal biases. They discussed how in a scenario where a Black face and White face are both categorized as pleasant, “preexisting associations that are opposite in direction – which might be expected for White subjects raised in a culture imbued with pervasive residues of a
history of anti-Black discrimination – the subject should find White pleasant faces to be easier” (p. 1465).

Not all unconsciousness should be viewed negatively, as Dijksterhuis (2004) studied the impact of “unconscious thought” and found that it improved the quality of decisions. Payne, Bettman, and Johnson (1988) also found similar results as Dijksterhuis’s, as their study revealed that people made better decision under pressure than when they were allowed to consciously consider a decision over a longer period of time. Karpinski and Hilton (2001) found that explicit attitudes predict behavior – IAT did not – which appears in conflict with Dijksterhuis and Payne et al.’s (1988) studies suggesting that implicit behavior (unconscious thought) leads to better decisions. The fact that explicit attitudes and implicit attitudes differ, provides evidence in support the notion that people can have varying opinions towards people, objects, or topics. People may explicitly make a connection that does not align with their implicit thoughts, meaning they may not always expressly state what they believe.

Building on implicit and explicit biases, leadership stereotypes may explain the lack of minorities in head coaching positions. Lord and Maher’s (1991) leadership categorization theory (LCT) describes how individuals create images of what a leader looks like in their minds, and then judge potential applicants base on the created images. Since sport organizations are predominantly White, and White coaches are celebrated and depicted in the media, it is most likely that the created image of the ideal leader is a White man. Stated another way, leadership positions are typically viewed as White property (Manning, 2013), where individuals that are White are able to use their identity to gain access or employment in the domains they desire. Thus, it may make sense in the minds of athletic administrators to hire White head coaches because leadership roles are typically reserved for them. Additionally, the standards and
experiences of leaders may be judged differently based on race. Biernat and Kobrynowicz (1997) studied the impact of race on applications for leadership positions and found that participants set lower minimum standards for Black than White applicants, but required more evidence to document ability in Black than White applicants. Stated another way, Black applicants needed to provide more proof that they would be capable leaders; no assumption was made that they would be just as adept as their White counterparts.

For Black coaches that do assume leadership positions, Barden, Maddux, Petty, and Brewer (2004) noted that when the same role is assigned to two different races, this results in a pattern of racial bias that reflects an interaction between the race and role. Thus, racial prejudice can be observed whenever an individual assumes a role incongruent with stereotypes surrounding people like them in that position. Rosette, Leonardelli, and Phillips (2008) surveyed college students and found that “being White” is perceived to be an attribute of the business leader prototype, Whites are typically viewed as more effective leaders, and that Whites possess more leadership potential. Their findings, when compared with Barden et al.’s (2004), suggest that racial minorities will encounter biases and discrimination if they are hired into roles that are stereotypically viewed as White. Interestingly, at least at the athletic director level, Wright, Eagleman, and Pedersen (2011) found no difference amongst racially different leaders in regard to education, experience, training, and competencies. Regardless, it would seem that Rosette et al. (2008) were correct in positing that “being White” is a central leadership characteristic in the United States.

The final meso level factor was organizational culture. If the organization is homogenous and unconcerned with diversity initiatives, that will impede minority coaches from obtaining employment. Bimper and Harrison (2015) analyzed collegiate athletic department mission and
diversity statements to determine to what extent those organizations stressed the importance of creating an inclusive environment. They found that the majority of statements were written from a color-blind lens, and that these institutions had “no skin in the game.” Regarding a color-blind lens, organizations frequently used statements like “regardless of race”, to which the authors’ criticized them for not considering the role that race plays in their organization and the impact that it has on the lives of Black individuals. Furthermore, their “no skin the game” comment referred to the lack of diversity initiatives that their athletic departments were attempting to implement. Essentially, their work claimed that a majority of university athletic departments support diversity, but offer no programs designed to facilitate and nurture a diverse workforce. The lack of diversity programming showed that athletic departments have not backed up their mission and diversity statements. One easy task that might foster diversity would be to mandate that minority members be included on all hiring or search committees (Singer, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2010).

At the micro level, Cunningham (2010) discussed turnover intentions and head coaching expectations and intentions as factors that should be considering when discussing the lack of minority coaches. Cunningham and Singer (2010) found that “although racial minorities, relative to Whites, expected more positive outcomes with being a coach and had greater intentions to pursue that profession, they also anticipated more barriers associated with coaching” (p. 1708). Additionally, their participants acknowledged that prejudice and discrimination were expected across their potential all vocational opportunities, which is why they still embraced coaching as a potential career. Finally, at the micro-level, Black coaches experience greater turnover intentions than their White counterparts due to treatment discrimination and lower levels of career satisfaction (Cunningham & Sagas, 2007). This might occur because they tend to be hired into
peripheral, non-decision-making, roles when they first enter into the coaching profession (Anderson, 1993).

**Racial Discrimination in College Football**

Previous studies examining the underrepresentation of Black head coaches in college football have analyzed different concepts such as the career focus (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), career loyalty (Reilly, Brett, & Stroh, 1994), career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), career sponsorship (Dreher & Ash, 1990), coaching self-efficacy (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998), glass ceiling (Kaplan & Ferris, 2001), human capital (Cunningham & Sagas, 2002), job satisfaction (Quinn & Staines, 1979), organizational loyalty (Patchen, 1965), and social capital (Lin, 2001).

Cunningham, Sagas, and Ashley (2001) attempted to explain this issue utilizing an institutional theory perspective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). They found that “although Black coaches were more socialized to the coaching profession than were White coaches, they anticipated leaving the profession sooner” (p. 142). Additional findings included that (a) Blacks are constrained by societal and occupational factors, such as hiring discrimination; (b) Blacks leave the coaching profession earlier than their White counterparts; and (c) Blacks do not view coaching as a primary career path. The fact that Black coaches were more likely to leave the profession earlier than their White counterparts, may help to explain the underrepresentation of Black head coaches in college football. This discrepancy led to their call for more research into the experiences of minority coaches and whether or not they feel discriminated against in the workplace, which has mostly been addressed through quantitative means and a few mixed methods studies.

For those minorities that are afforded with opportunities to coach, a glass cliff effect may be part of their experiences (Turick & Bopp, 2016). The glass cliff suggests that certain
leadership positions are relatively risky or precarious since they are more likely to involve management of organizational units that are in crisis (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). The glass cliff is an extension of the glass ceiling, which Cunningham (2003) defined by suggesting “that persons without power in organizations (e.g., women and racial minorities) cannot advance to upper-level positions because of artificial barriers” (p. 58). His study of African American student-athletes revealed that they were less interested in entering the collegiate coaching profession – only 1 in 3 had an interest – and believed they would have fewer opportunities to coach. Interestingly, there were no differences in *intent to become a head coach*. Investigations of the glass ceiling involve understanding whether all individuals believe promotion systems are fair and career advancement is possible (Kaplan & Ferris, 2001).

Research shows that the promotion systems in college football reward coaches differently based on race, as Black coaches perceive discrimination based on their race (Cunningham, Bruening, & Straub, 2006), have fewer opportunities for advancement (Cunningham et al., 2006), and receive fewer returns for their human and social capital investments (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005). Cunningham and Sagas (2004a) discussed human capital as the accrual of job-related personal investments (e.g., education, experience, training, and competences) to gain positive outcomes in their careers and jobs. According to Becker (1993), the two most important forms of human capital are one’s training and education. Wright et al. (2011) reported that the research, in regards to coaching, suggests that “playing experience could represent the most substantial human capital variable in how it is related to a coach’s professional socialization, occupational commitment, and occupational turnover intent” (p. 37). Lin (2001) described social capital as the resources (e.g. influence, information, status, etc.) that are embedded within an individual’s social network. Day (2012) analyzed the advancement of
college football coaches by race and found that one-quarter of White coaches have obtained a head coach or coordinator position by their 11th year; it takes 13 seasons before one-quarter of Black coaches can say the same. Furthermore, one-half of White coaches have obtained a head coach or coordinator position by the end of the 15th year; Black coaches never reach a point where one-half of them obtain such roles. Day’s analysis concluded with acknowledging that Black coaches are at a disadvantage to White coaches at every stage of their careers. This disadvantage might evolve into what Thomas (2001) described as his two tournament system, where minorities become discouraged when they are passed over by their White counterparts that they perceive to be not as/similarly qualified. This could demotivate Black coaches and/or cause their performance to slip.

Since most college football head coaches and administrators are White (Lapchick et al., 2018), it is likely that minorities will perceive a glass ceiling (e.g. that the coaching position may not be a viable career path) or glass cliff (e.g. that the coaching opportunities for Black coaches are at institutions in crisis) effects. Maume (1999a) stated that, in general, Whites were more likely than Blacks to be promoted, and that “Black men, Black women, and White women waited longer than did White men for the managerial promotions they received” (p. 483). Gemmell (2012) discussed how there is evidence to support the idea that Black coaches accept bad jobs, which may lead to a glass cliff predicament. Discrepancies in the first year winning percentage of Black versus White head coaches (Turick and Bopp, 2016) supports the notion that Black coaches are not always inheriting talented programs, and that more research should be conducted in this area. Subsequently, an argument could be made that if Black coaches are more likely to be selected for positions with a higher likelihood of failure, those outcomes may serve to reinforce preexisting stereotypes regarding their ability to be leaders.
In reference to leadership, potential prejudices associated with Black coaches might be incongruent with what individuals perceive to be the attributes necessary to hold a head coaching position. Rosette et al.’s (2008) found that being White is the perceived leadership ideal, since Whites are viewed as more effective and having more leadership potential, which creates a hostile employment proposition for minority coaches. In accordance with Lord and Maher’s (1991) leadership categorization theory, Rosette et al.’s work suggests that fans and administrators may believe sport coaches should be White, or at least that White coaches will be most effective and have the most potential. The differences in how coaches are perceived due to their race might explain why the media portrays White coaches as having greater football knowledge than Blacks (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010); because Black coaches are placed into positions where strategy/game plan development are not a function of their job. Psychology research further supports this as Barden et al. (2004) found that race and context are important in assigning attributes to individuals. In reference to intelligence, Whites were viewed as smarter than Blacks, with Blacks being viewed as more athletic than Whites. These differing viewpoints form the foundation for occupational segregation in sport.

Sack, Singh, and Thiel (2005) described stacking, or occupational segregation, as the assigning of individuals to certain positions based on assumptions regarding one’s race. Advancing the notion that Black coaches may be hurt by the recruiter role, Day (2015) found that Black coaches’ careers, compared to their White counterparts, are harmed more by occupying non-central coaching positions. His analysis noted that Black coaches accounted for 51 percent of his “stuck in non-central” group; a group of coaches that remained in peripheral roles. Day (2018) extended his work in this area and determined that “Blacks…were more likely to become stuck in stagnant career trajectories characterized by low-level positions that
presumably make them more vulnerable to dismissal and downward mobility” (p. 11). Operating in positions that are non-central and subject to be dismissed makes the coaching profession and big risk for Black coaches.

If Black coaches are being hired into positions with a recruiting focus and Whites are obtaining positions that focus more with strategizing and game planning, then it stands to reason that Black coaches might not have the same understanding or knowledge of the game as White coaches. Day (2012) suggested that the placing of Black coaches into non-central coaching positions aligns with Collins’ (1997) concept of “racialized jobs.” The concept of racialized jobs emerged from her work interviewing Black managers that had been marginalized to handle issues typically viewed as Black, such as affirmative action compliance and community relations in areas with a large minority population. Thomas (2001) found further evidence of racialized jobs in his study of corporate professionals, as minority managers often dealt with community relations, equal employment opportunity, or ethnic market issues. Just as Collins’ (1997) work found that Black individuals were hired as managers (a positive) but were given Black issues to address (a negative), Black coaches may exist in a profession that treats them similarly. The problem comes from Collins observation that occupying racialized jobs limited the skill development of Black managers, which consequently stagnated their career trajectories. Black coaches may be hindered by the jobs they hold if the tasks required of them do not align with their future career goals. Finch, McDowell, and Sagas (2010) found that the efforts of Black players and coaches to fight the stereotypes ascribed to them has not been successful, as they continue to be disregarded in during hiring processes, which would seemingly perpetuate the stereotype that they have limited football knowledge and thus establishes a ceiling for how high (or low) administrators perceive they should be able to climb.
The discriminatory barriers faced by Black coaches have left them with the perceptions that they will have less career-related opportunities, less career satisfaction, and greater occupational turnover intentions than their White counterparts (Cunningham & Sagas, 2004b). Cunningham et al. (2005) defined career satisfaction “as an anticipated affective state resulting from positive experiences and processes associated with the sport management profession” (p. 45). As alluded to by John Embree in his discussion of the caliber of jobs Black coaches obtain, it is likely that many Black coaches have low levels of career satisfaction. Striving for employment in an industry that affords them unequal opportunities and treatment, such as lack of time, or needing to accept bad jobs, may negatively influences the experiences they have in sport.

Whether or not Black coaches receive support from their superiors, gain confidence in their coaching abilities, and have a loyalty to their institution are all factors in their career satisfaction and/or intent to leave the coaching profession. College football coaches should have strong loyalty towards the organizations that employ them, since the central life interest (Dubin, Champoux, and Porter, 1975) of the organizational members revolves around work. Coaching is more than a traditional 9am-to-5pm job, with coaches often arriving early and leaving late. Dreher and Ash (1990) attempted to explain the lack of women in managerial positions by looking at the career mentorship or sponsorship relationships between men and women. They argued that access to more senior members of an organization would have positive career effects for the protégé. Thomas (2001) found a similar connection with race, as his research revealed that racial minorities who advanced the furthest in their careers had a strong network of mentors and corporate sponsors who nurtured their professional development. If access to mentoring relationships is limited for racial minorities who aspire to coach college football, then negative
salary and promotional consequences are likely to be the result. Thus, an examination of the advocacy of the head coach for all his assistants to achieve their career goals is necessary, as his support is likely to serve as one of the most important factors in the occupational advancement of his assistants. Thomas commented as much when he mentioned that mentor(s) of minorities should be aware of the challenges race may present their protégé. To that end, the education and preparation of head coaches to develop and maintain interracial mentoring relationships should be an athletic administration priority. This education and preparation is important, as Thomas observed that “many cross-race mentoring relationships suffer from ‘protective hesitation’: both parties refrain from raising touchy issues” (p. 105). Thus suggesting that the mentor-mentee relationship may be hindered when the mentor does not know how to engage in uncomfortable dialogue, or understanding the barriers that racial minorities face in pursuing their desired careers.

Everhart and Chelladurai (2008) investigated coaching self-efficacy, which they defined as “one’s confidence in his/her capacity to perform the coaching tasks effectively” (p. 32). Depending on a minority assistant coach’s proximity to the head coach, the training they have received, and the task(s) they are asked to perform, it is reasonable to expect that minority coaches may have different levels of self-efficacy than their White counterparts. Additionally, their career loyalty should be considered in this conversation. Career loyalty represents loyalty to one's career as opposed to loyalty towards their employer (Reilly, Brett, & Stroh, 1994). Black coaches may have stronger attachments to their institutions, understanding that few non-Whites are afforded coaching opportunities. Conversely, they may recognize that few chances exist, so it is important to capitalize on any chances for advancement sooner rather than later. When considering Adler and Adler’s (1988) five elements essential to the development of intense
loyalty in organizations: alignment, commitment, domination, identification, and integration, minority coaches may develop feelings that hinder them from forming loyal bonds to their institutions if one of those areas is found lacking. This is especially true in regards to the integration component, as they found that “organizations that are structured so that individuals are dependent on the success of the group for their own success will be more likely to produce intense loyalty” (p. 415).

Cunningham and Sagas (2005) used homologous reproduction theory (Kanter, 1977) to investigate the racial disparity in coaching hires at the collegiate basketball level. Homologous reproduction refers to a process by which individuals hire people that are similar or the same as them, which in the context of coaching would mean that Black head coaches would hire Black assistants and White head coaches would hire White assistants. They found that White head coaches were more likely than were Black head coaches to have White assistant coaches on staff and vice versa. By the same token, in the context of college football, Bopp and Sagas (2012) found that the race of most assistants on a staff in football depends on the race of the head coach, with coaches tending to hire assistants that are racially similar. Although, it is important to note that not all same-race association led to similar outcomes.

Day and McDonald (2010) found that maintaining homophilious contacts was more positive for White than Black coaches. They reported that Black coaches with different race contacts reported more promotions than Black coaches with similar contacts; meaning Black coaches with White contacts were better situated for career advancement. Reliance on racially similar contacts may lead to Black coaches being connected to lower status members in the coaching community, as Black coaches typically do not hold central or decision-making power positions (Day, 2011). The extent to which head coaches’ support and sponsor the career
advancement of racially different assistants, and their training on the value of diversity in organizations, should be examined. In addition to training coaches and administrators, involving human resource professionals in the hiring process should be stressed. Saunders (2017) found that the majority of athletic directors reported that their institution’s human resource staff had moderate or little involvement with the hiring process. These individuals should be included to ensure thorough vetting and consideration of all candidates occurs.

Regarding the enjoyment Black coaches experience in their careers, Sagas and Cunningham (2005) found racial differences in the career satisfaction of coaches, a discrepancy in the number of promotions received, and organizational proximity to the head coach position among the coaches, with Black coaches scoring lower on each outcome. Thus, these three studies complement one another by helping to frame the problem. The majority of head coaches are White, White head coaches tend to hire White assistants, and Black assistants tend to operate on the periphery. This separation tends to occur at the start of coaching careers, as Johnson (2017) observed that Black players have historically been steered away from positions that are direct lines to high-profile assistant coaching jobs. Bopp (2010) discussed how this grouping of Black coaches into inferior jobs creates an accumulated disadvantage (Clark & Corcoran, 1986), in which Black coaches experience limited opportunities and resources as a result of those in structurally advantaged positions attempting to maintain their hegemonic dominance. Black student-athletes are likely aware of this issue as Cunningham and Singer (2010) found that racial minorities, relative to Whites, expected more positive outcomes with being a coach and had greater intentions to pursue that profession, they also anticipated more barriers associated with coaching.
Turick and Bopp (2016) examined data from the 2008-2015 college football seasons to determine what trends in the representation of Black coaches at the head coach and offensive coordinator position had occurred, whether the on-field success (i.e. win-loss records) varies according to the head coach’s race, and the difference in offensive output of a team based on the race of that team’s offensive coordinator. Additionally, they examined coaching tenures in college football from 2003-2015 to determine if Black head coaches have been given the same amount of time as their White counterparts to succeed. They found a plateauing effect in the promotion of Black coaches to the head coach position, that the number of Black coaches holding offensive coordinator positions has decreased, that White head coaches won a higher percentage of their games per season than their Black counterparts, teams with a White offensive coordinator tended to have more prolific passing attacks, that White head coaches spent more time at an institution compared to Black head coaches, and that White head coaches had a significantly higher winning percentage in their first season at a new school compared to Black head coaches.

The fact that Black coaches are more likely to hire Black assistants (Bopp & Sagas, 2012) and have shorter tenures (Turick & Bopp, 2016) likely creates issues for Black coaches. Cunningham and Sagas (2004b) reported that “coaches employed on coaching staffs with little variation in tenure have more positive attitudes toward their occupation than do coaches on staffs with significant variations in coaches’ tenure” (p. 249). If staffs lead by Black head coaches involve more Black assistants than those on a White head coach’s staff, then the shortened tenures for a Black head coach will impact his assistants. Those assistants may form negative views of the profession and desire to leave coaching sooner, as they consider the evaluation of Black coaches to be unfair.
Of particular concern is the lack of Black offensive coordinators, as Johnson noted that having coordinator experience is almost required to become a head coach; only 14 of the 128 head coaches in 2017 had no previous coordinator experience. While having experience as a coordinator important, it is especially important to obtain that experience on the offensive side of the ball as there is a growing trend of administrators hiring offensive-minded coaches (Barnett, 2015; Dodd, 2015; Forde, 2015). Furthermore, Johnson noted that the prime positions that funnel into the offensive coordinator position (i.e. quarterback coach and offensive line coach) are typically held by Whites; there were only three Black quarterback and three Black offensive line coaches at the Power 5 level during the 2017 season. If you cannot work with quarterbacks it can be difficult to become an offensive coordinator. Day (2012) analyzed the position a coach played and their coaching role later on and determined that Black coaches are harmed, in terms of career prospects, more so than White coaches for having played a non-central position. Understanding how the promotion systems within college football function is important, otherwise false hope might develop regarding improvements. Lapchick (2010) said as much when he wrote “I think most people believe there are numerous African-American assistant coaches, waiting and ready to step up when the opportunity comes” (p. 82). This pool of applicants will only exist when they are afforded with the same opportunities and backgrounds of their counterparts.

**Racial Tasking in College Football**

Understanding this paltry under-representation of Black head coaches and offensive coordinators under the tenets of racial tasking (Bopp & Sagas, 2014), Turick and Bopp (2016) argued that since Black coaches have not received many head coaching opportunities it may indicate that those involved in the hiring process have formed a prejudice regarding the ability of Black coach’s to perform successfully in leadership roles, or at least that hiring committees
and/or athletic administrators may view Black coaches differently solely based on race. It is important to determine what biases those in positions of power have formed of Black coaches.

Bopp and Sagas (2012) found that stacking continues to remain a potential influence, and adversely so for Blacks, on the career coaching outcomes of current and future players. A recent extension of the stacking literature, to include racial tasking, was recently presented by Bopp and Sagas (2014). They defined racial tasking in sport as a function of one's prejudice toward a minority athlete's capabilities, both mental and physical, to perform. Accordingly, “the tasks athletes are asked to perform are dependent upon the athlete's race and vary despite occupying the same playing position” (p. 140). Extending racial tasking to encompass coaches, Turick and Bopp (2016) discussed how racial tasking might serve to explain one's prejudice toward a minority coach's capabilities, both mental and physical, to perform. Just as the Black quarterbacks (tasked with running the ball more often than White quarterbacks) and White quarterbacks (tasked with throwing the ball more often than Black quarterbacks) were used differently by their coaches based on race (Bopp & Sagas, 2014), Black and White coaches might be utilized and viewed differently by athletic administrators and head football coaches as a result of their race.

Day (2018) remarked that task-based segregation may impede the ability of Black coaches to develop the knowledge and/or skills necessary to advance in their careers. Additionally, he commented that failure to develop those attributes might make Black coaches prime candidates to be fired during occasions when dismissals occur. There is some support for suggesting that those in power would view individuals differently due to his/her race, as Mueller, Parcel, and Tanaka (1989) found that Black managers were evaluated and judged more harshly than their White counterparts, and they were typically tasked differently. The fact that Black
coaches are viewed as solid recruiters may make them more appealing to administrators or head coaches that want to improve the talent in their program. Those prejudices are beneficial for Black coaches in terms of obtaining employment, but may be detrimental when it comes to career advancement.

As Cunningham and Bopp (2010) remarked, White coaches are typically described as better strategist, which most likely gives them an edge when pursuing head coaching vacancies. Thus, Black coaches may be hired because stereotypical assumptions about their abilities converge with the needs of those in positions of power. Stated another way, Black coaches might be hired solely for their perceived recruiting abilities, and asked to engage in tasks that keep them from those tasks (e.g. game preparation) that might better prepare them to transition into leadership roles later on in their careers. The fact that the position of administrators or head coaches that are hiring may have changed, not necessarily their attitude towards minority coaches, might suggest that the strides made by minorities in occupying the head coach position occurred because White stakeholders (e.g. coaches, boosters, and fans) were able to benefit. This notion, that minorities achieve equality only when Whites benefit, embodies interest convergence theory.

Bell (1980) first presented the theory of interest convergence. He grounded the theory in the premise that minorities only achieve racial equality when their interests converge or align with the interests of those in power. Because racism advances the interests of both White elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001), thus the empowered group needs to feel incentivized to create change. These incentives likely that the form of increases in the material wealth of those in power. Ladson-Billings (2013) suggested that interest convergence is about
“alignment, not altruism” (p. 38). Interest convergence theory aligns with racial tasking because those in positions of power make decisions based on their prejudicial assumptions about the abilities of different race coaches; believing that in hiring Black coaches they will be able to bring in better players and subsequently win more games.

Bell (1980) developed the theory of interest convergence in his analysis of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Brown v. Board of Education*, contending that “the decision in *Brown* to break with the Court’s long-held position on these issues cannot be understood without some consideration of the decision’s value to Whites” (p. 524). Bell believed that the decision to overturn *Brown* converged with White ideals in three ways. First, it improved the United States’ damaged reputation with other nations that saw segregation in America as an issue. Remember that the United States was striving to champion the idea that American democracy is the best form of government. Second, it pacified a Black community that saw no reason to support an American democracy that treated them unjustly compared to their Black counterparts living in the Soviet Union. Winning the support of Black citizens at home was important in efforts to advocate for American democracy abroad. Third, and lastly, the removal of segregation from the American South had the potential to lead to strong economic growth for Whites.

Extending Bell’s (1980) definition, McCoy and Rodricks (2015) defined interest convergence as a tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT) which proposes that “historically oppressed people (People of Color) advance socially and politically when their interests converge with the interests of those in power (typically White, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied males)” (p. 93). McCoy and Rodricks (2015) offered an example of interest convergence occurring within higher education by mentioning that some institutions “admit Students of Color
in an effort to meet specific diversity goals, even though the campus climate may not be inclusive and the resources necessary to support Students of Color’s persistence at that institution may be limited” (p. 10). The powerful groups referenced by McCoy and Rodricks (2015) also hold power in sport: which has historically been a prejudicial space in which diversity in the workforce does not exist (Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2001). Although sport is becoming more diverse (Lapchick et al., 2018), the incremental changes that have happened are occurring slowly. According to DeCuir and Dixson (2004), incremental change is the concept where change for People of Color and other marginalized groups occurs in an acceptable manner to those currently empowered. The gradual increase in minority coaching hires, rather than a surging uptick, is likely to be preferred by Whites so as to not lose their grip on who is in control of college sports.

Interest convergence theory helps explain previous findings in sport-specific research, which includes the promotion of coaches and administrators. Steward and Cunningham (2015), when studying White participant perceptions of athletic administrator résumés, found that Black individuals perceived as highly identified with their race were scored less favorably than those did that were lowly identified. This finding shows obtaining employment as an administrator was a greater possibility for People for Color (good for People of Color) as long as they did not have a strong racial identity that might lead to them questioning the status quo of Whiteness in intercollegiate athletics (good for White people in power). Additionally, this finding supports the belief that individuals make decisions using prejudicial assumptions about a minority’s capabilities to perform a task, with highly identified minorities being viewed as unfit for leadership roles.
Bopp’s (2010) work revealed that practices such as racial tasking may help to serve and maintain the hegemonic environment cultivated by Whites in which Black coaches experience limited career opportunities, receive less returns for their human and social capital, and are provided with fewer resources and opportunities for development.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate Black college football coaches’ experiences of working in a White dominated intercollegiate sport space. Although the focus was on coaching at the collegiate level, participants frequently discussed their high school and professional experiences. Most participants had diverse coaching experiences, which included serving as an assistant or head coach at the high school level, interning in the NFL’s Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellowships program, or working as an assistant in the NFL. Additionally, some had also served in administrative roles provided them with a different perspective of the coaching profession.

The following research questions guided this examination:

RQ1: What are the experiences of Black men working in the college football coaching profession?

RQ2: What racial inequalities, if any, do Black coaches believe exist within college football?

RQ3: Do Black college football coaches believe they are tasked to complete different assignments than their White coaching counterparts based on race?

RQ4: What is the opinion of Black college football coaches on the sport management literature that attempts to explain their potentially disparate experiences?

RQ5: Do Black college football coaches have ideas for reforming the collegiate coaching profession that would promote racial equality?

Sampling Frame

A purposive and snowball sampling method (Strass & Corbin, 1998) was utilized to recruit Black men with current or previous coaching experience at the collegiate level to participate in interviews addressing the research questions. First, after IRB approval was secured, participants were recruited through emailing Black coaches, both at the head and assistant coach levels, at the DI-FBS level and inviting them to participate in the study. In addition to the 10 on-
field roles that exist at the DI-FBS level (e.g. head coach, coordinators, and position coaches), football programs hire individuals to serve as analysts, graduate assistants, and quality control coaches; typically on either offense or defense. Therefore, in accordance with the purposive sampling method, those individuals were included as potential interviewees since they occupy the entry level roles of the college football coaching profession. Then additional coaches were contacted through a referral system; participants suggested current/former colleagues that they believed had experiences and opinions that should be heard. It is important to note that referred candidates still needed to meet the criteria of being a Black man with experience in coaching Division I college football. The last purposive sampling criteria was level of competition; coaches at DI-FBS schools were initially targeted because the review of literature showed that coaches at that level traditionally receive the most attention from advocacy groups and researchers.

Participants

These sampling methods resulted in 17 Black men, with varying levels of coaching experiences, agreeing to participate in this study; 14 of which currently held a position at the DI-FBS level, as well as one each from the DI-FCS, NAIA, and high school levels, respectively. Of the 14 coaches from the DI-FBS level, nine are coaching at a Group of Five (e.g. American Athletic Conference, Conference USA, Mid-American Conference, Mountain West Conference, and the Sun Belt Conference) institution, four were coaching at a Power 5 institution (e.g. Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 12 Conference, Big Ten Conference, Pac-12 Conference, and the Southeastern Conference), and one was coaching at a military or service academy (e.g. Air Force, Army, and Navy) (see Table 3-1).

The sample includes a diversity of current positional coaches, including defensive back/secondary, defensive line, offensive line, running back, wide receiver, as well as director of
football operations, graduate assistant – defense, quality control – defense, and high school head coach. The breakdown for each side of the ball, with a few off-the-field administrators, was fairly balanced with seven coaches on defense, seven coaches on offense, two in an administrative role, and one as the head coach of a high school program. The two director of football operations professionals and the high school head coach all had previous Division I college football coaching experiences. As might be assumed or inferred from the roles listed above, this sample of coaches ranged in experience from a second year graduate assistant to a 40 year coaching veteran (who also had prior experience coaching in the National Football League (NFL)). Additionally, the roles occupied by study participants reflected the occupational stacking discussed by Day (2018) and others.

In terms of demographic information, if you remove the outlier coach that had 40 years of experience, the average participant had spent 10.5 years in the profession. The majority of coaches were in the mid-30s to early 40s. Since Black coaches are marginalized within their sport, and that a small number of Black coaches work with certain position groups, the process of cleaning their interviews to remove identifiers was important in protecting their confidentiality. Additionally, in an effort to still socially locate each participants, their introductions in the results include general – nonspecific – information.

Data Collection

A list of possible participants was developed by visiting the football webpages on all 130 DI-FBS team programs and recording the names and contact information of Black coaches (e.g., head coach, coordinators, position coaches, quality control coaches, and graduate assistants) in an Excel spreadsheet so that they could be emailed and invited to participate in the study. The coach’s race was determined by the primary coder, and all participants expressed that they identified as African American/Black (they used the two terms interchangeably). Participants
were provided with an opportunity to choose a pseudonym name to protect their confidentiality at the beginning of each interview. Of the 17 coaches that took part in this study, 12 responded to the initial recruitment email with the other 5 having been recommended through referrals. Only the study investigator had access to response data (e.g. interview audio files and transcripts), which was stored on a password protected computer in the investigator’s office. Data were cleaned so that no identifiable information was recorded that could link participants to their responses. The consent form (see Appendix B) specified these protections – as well as specifics surrounding the study – and was attached to the invitation email that was sent out to prospective participants requesting that they consider being interviewed.

In qualitative research the sample size is dependent upon theoretical saturation, or “the point in category development at which no new properties, dimensions, or relationships emerge during the analysis” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143). Theoretical saturation requires that a diversity of opinions have been gathered and that the information gleaned from each new interview has essentially become redundant. Despite the small size of this marginalized group, as Black coaches are substantially underrepresented compared to the player pool (Lapchick et al., 2018), a diverse sample of coaches were interviewed and given an opportunity to share the experiences and opinions on the coaching profession. Although each coach has his own unique story, the final interview gave support to the belief that saturation had occurred due to the similarities of his responses to others.

A 12-question semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C) was developed through consultation with academic experts with strong previous qualitative research backgrounds. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected as the sole primary data collection tool to study the experiences of Black coaches in college football with a focus on the key issues highlighted by
sport management literature covering this topic. A semi-structured interview was utilized to allow for discussions to go in different directions based on the participants’ backgrounds. The experiences of someone that is in his first year graduate assistant versus a 40-year coaching veteran are vastly different, so the interview technique should account for that.

Data collection took place from mid-January 2018 through mid-April 2018, with the majority of interviews, 15 of the 17, taking place over the phone. Two of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. Semi-structured interviews were utilized in an effort to afford Black coaches the opportunity to provide commentary and insight into their coaching experiences in college football, critique the research aimed at examining the lack of minority coaches in college football, and suggest changes that might improve racial diversity in the college football coaching ranks. The use of semi-structured interviews to collect data allows researchers to interpret meanings drawn from the participants’ personal narratives (McMillan, 2012). Additionally, it created an open dialogue environment that allowed for follow-up questions and deviations that were pertinent to each participant based on their past coaching experiences and current coaching status.

An initial invitation email (see Appendix D) was sent to prospective study participants in mid-February, with a second follow-up beginning sent out at the end of February. The contact date was selected with consideration paid to the college football recruiting calendar. The December and January months are very busy for college coaches (e.g. participation/preparation for bowl games, potential job changes, recruiting trips/visits, etc.), so data collection began in mid-February to better accommodate coaching schedules. The first Wednesday in February is National Signing Day (NSD), which is typically when coaches finalize their incoming recruiting classes. In 2018 that date ended up being February 7th, so contact was made early the following
week. Interested participants were asked to respond to the contact email so that an interview date and time could be established.

Since participants were scattered across the country face-to-face interviews were only possible with two of the participants, with the remaining 15 being conducted over the phone. Of note, I initially planned to conduct Skype or Zoom meetings in lieu of the phone, but that was rejected by the Institutional Review Board. Interviews ranged from 50-65 minutes. The two face-to-face interviews were recorded using the “Voice Recorder” application on my cellular phone. The 15 phone interviews were recorded using the “Call Recorder Pro” application, which allows individuals to record (and automatically saves) both incoming and outgoing calls. Audio files were then submitted to the GoTranscript service for verbatim transcription. Upon receipt, I reviewed the transcripts to check for consistency with the audio files and to clean-up any errors, and then sent transcripts to the respective participants for member checking.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis web-based software program Dedoose was utilized to code and interpret the data from the interviews. According to Smith and Sparkes (2009), analyzing and interpreting participant narratives is “an important and vibrant means to develop our understanding of people’s lived experiences of their sporting and everyday lives” (p. 10). Data were analyzed using Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) constant comparative method. This procedure allows “readers to understand how the analyst obtained his theory from the data” (Glaser, 1965, p. 443), through the use of a codified process.

Since this study utilized the constant comparative method approach (Glaser, 1965), the interview process provided an opportunity for me to gain a better understanding of the experiences of Black coaches in college football; and that understanding aided in my analysis of the data. Glaser’s (1965) strategy for qualitative data analysis which involves “(1) comparing
incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory” (p. 439). The first step, comparing incidents, requires coding the data. Additionally, the constant comparative method allowed for the study to evolve as questions were added or re-shaped throughout based on previous conversations.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) described different coding methods (e.g. open, axial, and selective) that can be utilized in analyzing data. The first step in the process, open-coding, was accomplished through highlighting and labeling data in Dedoose to better understand and categorize participant experiences. I used incident-by-incident coding, or a line-by-line coding process, to breakdown the data into smaller pieces. Several categories were then developed from these initial open codes. Once these categorizes were created, an analysis took place comparing and contrasting each coach’s categories, or themes, with those of the other coaches to determine what links, if any, existed (i.e., axial coding).

The data were coded inductively so as to allow for emergent themes to take shape, however, racial tasking (Bopp & Sagas, 2014; Turick & Bopp, 2016) served as a lens through which I interpreted the data from interview questions that were asked to address RQ3. Since racial tasking is a relatively new phenomenon, theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) is still maintained as there is not a body of literature for the data to be forced into. Procedurally, I sent the audio files to a service for transcription, thoroughly read each interview transcript, requested member checks (Maxwell, 2013), and then proceeded to the open coding of the raw data phase. Examples of open codes may include key issues and topics from the sport management literature on racial inequality in college coaching such as “Racial Tasking”, “Eddie Robinson Rule”, and “Discrimination”.
The trustworthiness of this qualitative study has been achieved through following Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four concepts for conducting a competent qualitative study: 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability. Efforts were made to adequately describe the participants and setting for the study, the results were reported in such a way that they have the potential to be transferred to other settings, the interview questionnaire, or instrument, was continually be adapted based on previous conversations, and the background of our participants was provided to lend authority to the quality of the data. Lastly, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement with the material, and providing rich and thick descriptions was utilized to support the trustworthiness of the findings (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2011). To that end, I am confident that, based on the procedures used, the findings from this study constitute competent quality work.

Additionally, the trustworthiness of this study was achieved through considering my positionality (Sanchez, 2010) and engaging in reflexivity (Reinhart & Reuland, 1993). My status as a White male has the potential to impact the way in which he might be received by his interviewees, as the interviewees that he spoke with on the phone were informed of his identity. As a White man researching the underrepresentation of Black coaches, my experiences working around college football are likely to be vastly different than those of my participants. In an attempt to create a comfort level with my interviewees, each interview started with a discussion of who I am, why I am interested in this topic, and an explanation of what I am hoping to accomplish through this research. This was done to make clear my motivations, as my reasons for this line of inquiry directly relate to the purpose of the study. It is my belief that a great rapport was established with each coach and that the information obtained for this study accurately represents the experiences and lives of the 17 men that participated.
Table 3-1. Participants’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years in Coaching*</th>
<th>Current Level</th>
<th>Geographic Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>Director of Football Operations</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>Offensive Line</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolo</td>
<td>Running Back</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Pacific Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Defensive Back</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Quality Control – Defense</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Head Coach – High School</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Heartland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>Wide Receiver</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Pacific Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Defensive Line</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>East Central</td>
</tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>NAIA</td>
<td>East Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJ</td>
<td>Wide Receiver</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Cornerback</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>East Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
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<td>FBS</td>
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<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Graduate Assistant – Defense</td>
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<td>FBS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin</td>
<td>Cornerback</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>East Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Wide Receiver</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>FBS</td>
<td>Pacific Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricky</td>
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<td>FBS</td>
<td>Pacific Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TJ</td>
<td>Director of Football Operations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>FCS</td>
<td>East Central</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Years in coaching was rounded to the nearest 5 to protect confidentiality; participant that coached 40 years was rounded down to protect his identity.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The football coaches in this study varied in years of experience, positions held, and levels of competition, yet were all consistent in how they discussed the coaching profession. Our conversations covered a variety of topics and time frames, including a historical viewpoint on coaching, a present day critique of the field, and discussions of hope/pessimism for the future. A passion for the game, the ability to teach young men, an opportunity to provide for their families, and the competitive nature of both the game and their profession serve as key reasons for why the participants in this study continue to seek employment and career advancement in a field where they historically, and presently, have been marginalized.

Seven themes and accompanying subthemes became evident from the data: 1) Why They Coach (Being a role model to Black youth and Giving back to the game subthemes), 2) Coaching Experiences (Personal/sport background, Daily grind, and Coaching mentorship subthemes), 3) Career Aspirations (Career goals, Player reflections, Occupational sponsorship, and Being a trailblazer subthemes), 4) Racial Inequality (The inner circle, Financial considerations, Career advancement, Perceived impact of race, Stakeholders as a factor, and Stacking subthemes), 5) Racial Tasking (Player management and Job tasks subthemes), 6) Research Knowledge (Critiquing the literature and Conversations with colleagues subthemes), and 7) Suggestions for Racial Equality (Eddie Robinson Rule, Reform suggestions, and Optimism for the future, and Future research suggestions subthemes). These themes and subthemes are discussed in more detail below.

Theme 1: Why They Coach

Participants frequently discussed how the coaching profession affords them an opportunity to remain involved with the sport after their playing career, as well as give back to a
sport that gave them so much. Impacting young, Black athletes was revealed to be one way they can give back. Each participant played college football, with a few going on to play professional football. Whether it be the participant’s excitement for getting to coach and mentor young Black kids, or recognizing that they need guidance, much focus was placed on developing athletes. The two main subthemes that emphasized the importance of Why They Coach were discussions surrounding coaching Black athletes and the ability to give back to the game through coaching and mentoring the next generation of players.

**Being a Role Model to Black Youth**

All of the coaches in this study understood the importance of the interactions they have with their athletes, especially their Black athletes. Having personally been influenced by previous coaches, the opportunity to work with young athletes and develop them as players and individuals was highly enticing and valued. In his depiction and framing of who these Black athletes are and what their upbringing may look like, Bolo, a current running back coach that has 25+ years of coaching experiences and is in his early 50s, remarked that “Especially in the inner city a lot of these young men don't have male role models to look up to, so you can kind of take it on.” Adding, “I just wanted to help people. Try to show them this different path is another way to be successful. I just wanted to show them that you can do it. If I could do it, they can do it.” Providing kids from the inner city with Black male role models was commonly discussed as something that programs should strive to accomplish. Eddie, an offensive line coach that has 15+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 30s, offered similar comments when he said:

> You have all these young Black men that are in the sport, and there aren't really any role models out there for them to follow, because it's some old White guy who can't really even touch base with what a young kid from Atlanta's going through.

His words add that these athletes need role models, and that it would be beneficial for those role models to be of the same race to make them more relatable. Eddie would go on to discuss how
this relatability would assist the coach in helping the athlete both on-and-off the field, such as
going to class and navigating everyday life. Additionally, Chase, a current wide receivers coach
that has 5+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 20s, noted that Black coaches that
have played the game and been through similar experiences to players “help to make it an easier
transition for the athlete.”

The fact that Black athletes might come from broken and/or troubled homes offers
supportive evidence for continuing to increase the number Black coaches on college football
staffs. Chris, a current defensive line coach that has 5+ years of coaching experiences and is in
his early 30s, referenced both of these issues, and the way that being a Black coach helps to
rectify them, when he said:

…A lot of them (Black players) are troubled. A lot of them have single parents at home. A lot
of the players are coming from different backgrounds and are seeking role models. As I go on
the road recruiting, you see a lot of African American high school coaches. At high school,
that's all they know. When I'm recruiting, a lot of kids and their parents relate to me because of
that, literally. They relate to me because I'm African American and that doesn't make me
better or this or that. It's just that you relate to who you relate to.

Once they transition into college, it may benefit Black athletes if they have role models to help
them navigate this new experience. Although this experience is new for many, the troubled
histories of some Black athletes situates them as a population that needs support systems in
place. Some participants recognized this need to provide young Black men with role models as
one of the factors that compelled them to get into coaching. Aaron, a current director of football
operations that has 10+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 40s, observed that this
need exists, while also chastising those currently occupying coaching roles:

I didn't think there were enough African American coaches out there helping young
African American males get into school and get scholarships. I saw a lot of talent go to
waste. I saw a lot of kids just took the wrong pathway because they didn't have anybody.
I saw high school coaches use kids during a football season, and then when football season was over they didn't have anything else to do with them.

The idea of taking the “the wrong pathway” most closely fits a narrative that Black coaches discussed and were worried about when discussing Black athletes. AJ, a current offensive line coach that has 10+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 30s argued that “College athletics is not just about football, you're looking to mentor men, coach them, and point them in the right direction to be successful.” Justin, a cornerbacks coach that has 15+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 30s, also discussed navigating towards the right path when he said “…the mentoring part is huge for me. Especially for me seeing guys that remind me of myself a little bit and helping them to navigate college life and getting ready for life after football.” Of note, it is important to consider the impact that learning how to navigate college life has on an individual’s post-graduation transition. For Black athletes, and the majority of college students, college represents a big change compared to what they are used to. Justin described this change and how coaching fits in:

For most guys, when you go to college that's your first time being away from your parents. Basically, you're just moving to an entire new circle of people in your life and trying to figure out who you can trust, who your friends are, and who you are is a big part of it. Trying to guide guys through that part of it and just the development off the field. Just being a person and being prepared for life after football.

That life after football transition is also something that Black coaches are cognizant of, especially since they all had previously played college football. To that end, participants discussed how it is important for coaches to prepare their athletes for life after sport. Chris talked about this and stated that his “…goal is by the time somebody leaves my room, I want them to be a better man and more life ready than they were when they entered my room. That's my passion. That's why I'm in it.” Focusing on player and personal development seems to be important pillars of the coaching profession for participants in this study.
James, a cornerbacks coach that has 15+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 30s, offered up an interesting story of how his off-the-field lifestyle as a Black coach was supposed to provide, and was received as such, an example to Black athletes of what they should aspire towards. He said:

He (another coach) brought me in and said, "The reason why Coach (Blank) hired you was so you could be a mentor to Black men, to Black kids." I didn't understand it then. He said that if you're going to live in a duplex, he could hire anybody. The point he was trying to make was pay a little more for where you're living. Now I'm living in a 4,000 sq. ft. house. I'm not bragging about my house or anything like that. The point was that when the kids come to your house, your players, they get a chance to see a Black man and say, "Dang coach, you ain't got to sell dope to live in a nice crib. You don't have to be a rapper, you don't have to play in the National Football League." No. actually, what you can do is get your education, treat people right, and you can provide for your family.

James was able, and encouraged, to show the Black players on his team that if they do the right things that they will put themselves in a position where they can provide for their families. It was the view of the coaching staff he was on, and later it would become his own, that the way he lived his life off the field was something that the Black athletes on the team would be cognizant of. By purchasing a home over a duplex, and choosing to live in a nicer neighborhood, James was able to be a role model to young Black men on his team.

In summary, Bolo probably offered the best statement that reflected an appreciation for being able to coach combined with an acknowledgment that the Black athletes involved should never be forgotten. He said:

It's a blessing to be in my shoes. I would never take it for granted what I'm doing and I give it a 100%, stay grounded, and stay humble. But never forget why we do what we do. I think sometimes, it's really easy to forget your whole purpose, and your purpose is to educate and affect young men's lives in a positive way.

**Giving Back to the Game**

The participants in this study each had their own unique stories of how they got into coaching and eventually achieved the positions they are in today. However, it was evident that
the idea of “giving back” – through coaching and mentoring young Black athletes – was paramount in their pursuits of a coaching career. TJ, a director of football operations that has 5+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 20s, mentioned that he “wanted to stay around the game and find a way to give something back to the game.” Undoubtedly, there is a feeling of obligation to show appreciation to the sport felt by the participants. Eddie articulated these points when we spoke by saying:

I just want to work in a profession that I love and mentor young men and help them become good citizens…I want to help guys go and get jobs, and I want to see them succeed, which wasn't really something I thought about too much when I was younger. Now I'm at the point where I feel like that's going to be my- that's going to be my mark that I leave.

Eddie also commented that “At a certain point, you just got to pay the good energy forward. If good stuff has come to you, you got to find a way to put it back out there.” Bolo also talked about giving back and feeling like he was obligated to repay the good fortune that he has experienced. He said:

Just wanted to go back and give back to something in my community where I was from. Tried to lend my experience to other people that had the same aspirations that I had. That was the thing, I just wanted to help people. Try to show them this different path is another way to be successful…If I could do it, they can do it.

What he is talking about here is giving back through coaching and teaching, which frequently stood out as a reason for entering the coaching profession. EJ, a wide receivers coach that has 25+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 60s, said that “I thought to get into college coaching because I like teaching.” He also commented that if players get quality coaching they will want to pursue the profession themselves. Chase remarked that having received quality coaching served as his main motivations for pursuing this career:

The main reason is, I wanted to help out young kids, young adults, grow up and be a man. I'd never had a bad coach. I always had good coaches that I still call today and that had a big impact on my life. I wanted to do the same for other young adults.
Since he never had a bad coach, his opinion of the profession was positive, and the professional and professional development he received compelled him to identify ways in which he might be able to pay it forward. Chad, a current head coach at the high school level that has 5+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 20s, is another participant that talked about the quality coaching that he received and how it made him want to give back to others. He said “Growing up as an athlete playing sports, a lot of times when I reflect back on the lessons I've learned and the people that have impacted my life, it always starts with the coaching.” Clearly, receiving great coaching creates a desire amongst former players to give back to the game through coaching the next group of players.

In addition to coaching playing a vital role for my interviewees during their playing days, coaching offered an opportunity to remain part of a sport to which they had become tethered. John, a wide receivers coach that has 20+ years of coaching experiences and is in his early 40s, discussed the attractiveness of coaching in terms of its ability to keep former players plugged into the game, while allowing them to give back by using their passion and knowledge to coach. He said:

When you finish playing ball, you still have a lot of love for it, but you also still have a lot of that energy. Another way for me to exercise that energy, what I found was that the best thing other than playing was coaching, and found a passion in that to further try to get into coaching just because of my love of the game.

In terms transitioning out of playing, three participants discussed how a career-ending injury caused them to consider coaching as a potential career. Brian, a current quality coach on defense that has 10+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 30s, who had been playing professional football, remarked that, “Once I got hurt, from there, I got out of playing professional football all together and started coaching.” James told me that after his injury that, “I just think for me being a player, all I wanted to do was be around football and coach. Once my
playing career ended, they (his coaching staff at the time) just said, ‘hey, just move into a coaching role.’” Finally, Jordan, a defensive graduate assistant that has 5+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 20s, articulated that:

…once I got hurt, I still wanted to teach. I felt like, "If I can't play I think right now maybe teaching is the best thing for me", so that was when coaching became interesting to me, so that was really the deciding factor if I couldn't play. I felt like at that point of time in my life, I think teaching was what I wanted to do.

The previous testimonies suggest that one of the main reasons for coaching is seeing the profession as a way to cope with an injury while staying involved in the game of football. Amongst those that had experienced a career-ending injury, they were typically encouraged to consider coaching by the coaches they were playing under at the time of the injury. Thus, the two main reasons for coaching that were mentioned in my conversations were the ability to give back to the game of football through the coaching and teaching of the next group of players.

**Theme 2: Coaching Experiences**

The second theme was coaching experiences, which included discussions of how participants started in the profession, conversations about the daily “grind” that coaches go through and discussions of mentorship.

**Personal/Sport Background**

The participants in this study shared several similarities when it came to their personal and sports backgrounds. Prior playing experience, working outside of football only to return, and feelings of uncertainty about what to do after their careers ended were frequently discussed. Participation in a variety of sports at an early age was a big part of each participant’s life, and played an important role in their communities. Brandon, a current defensive backs coach that has 5+ years of coaching experiences and is in his early 40s, referenced this when he said, “Like most other people in my neighborhood, sports was our outlet or it's what we all centered
around.” James definitely viewed sport as a central part of his life starting at an early age. His brothers played the game, so he was a ball boy as early as five years old. He pinpointed that as the start of his coaching career. James also grew up in poverty, and focusing on sports was a great way for James, and other participants, to attempt to cope with not having a lot of money.

Eddie commented that:

I guess you could say I was a welfare kid. We were on food stamps and all that sort of stuff. I got into a lot of trouble when I was younger, so my parents put me in private school around middle school. My parents never really had money. So everything I've had to do in this profession has been on my own.

He later would discuss how he viewed athletics as likely his only path towards getting into college. James also discussed his poor upbringing by commenting that his father was “a sixth grade dropout who worked on a farm” and later commented that he and his brother would hunt in order to eat dinner. Not every participant grew up in poverty, for instance Ricky, a wide receivers coach that has 5+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 20s, had a father that played and coached professional football, but many of them did not grow up in affluent family situations.

Regarding participation in sport, Bolo mentioned that, “I played high school football and ran track in high school, and then I went on to play Division II football and ran track in college”, which was a pretty common response; though it is important to note that the level of play varied from NAIA up through DI-FBS football. Playing lots of sports at the high school level, obtaining a scholarship/opportunity to walk-on, and then (for some) a brief professional career seemed to consistently represent the trajectory of respondents. Several participants were multi-sport athletes in college. AJ’s mindset was directly set on following the previously laid out path. He said, “My goal, when I entered middle school, seventh or eighth grade, I wanted to make sure that I grow--
I wanted to play Division I football. I had my mind made up. I wanted to play Division I football.” Ricky also expresses similar desires when he said that:

For me, I grew up playing all sorts of sports. I was played football, baseball, basketball, and soccer. I walked-on to my football program, as I didn’t have a scholarship coming out of high school. I redshirted my first year, and then started some as a freshman. I then started the next three years after. I had the chance to play some professional football and get paid to do it. I played a game I love, so I loved that.

The playing experience often led to the first coaching experience, whether that was as a student coach, graduate assistant, or full-time assistant. Jordan remarked that during his playing career he “ended up getting hurt, so I became a student assistant. Graduated and I still wanted to coach, so just started hitting the ground running, trying to network and trying to find openings and job posts.” Aside from injuries, the coaching background for many participants came from leveraging the relationships they made during their playing careers.

Chase commented that “Once I got done at my college, I GA’d for a year and after that year was over I got a full time gig at my alma mater.” Chris had an impressive professional career for a little while before getting his first coaching position at his alma mater. AJ also benefitted from past relationships saying:

One thing I knew was relationships are huge in any business. So, I would stay in contact with all my coaches that I played for, trying to get graduate assistant position. I got a grad assistant position at my alma mater and that is how I started into coaching.

Chad, Eddie, EJ, and Michael also were provided their first coaching experiences at their alma maters. In a humorous statement, Eddie recalled:

An opening just popped up at the college I went to. I reached out to the head coach who I played for. If there was a list of 10 guys, I was the 12th guy on the list. There were like 11 more guys before me that got offered the darn job. But luckily, all 11 guys in front of me, probably 20 guys, all turned it down, and I was the lucky guy.

The doors that opened for a lot of these men first came from the coaches and/or institutions that they played for, which suggests that coaches should consider themselves the gate keepers of the
profession for the young Black athletes they coach. Of course not every player goes into coaching as soon as their playing career expires, as evidenced by four of the participants in this study. Justin commented that:

After graduation, I got a job working in a business role. Didn’t really like it, didn’t really like the corporate world deal, so I decided I wanted to coach, or really I just missed football. So I wanted to get back involved somehow. Talked to my old college coach. He put me in contact with some people.

His comments reflects back to the previous discussion of how one’s playing career provides them with social capital, or a network of coaches to help them break into the profession, while at the same time showing how leaving the game can remind individuals of their passion for it. Aaron also went to work in corporate America for several years, occupying a variety of jobs, before deciding to pursue coaching. Bolo had a long career outside of sports, and upon transitioning out of that role he returned home. He said, “When I came back to my hometown, I went back to my high school. I wanted to get into coaching.” Finally, AJ took on the role of a juvenile corrections officer as he struggled to find his first coaching opportunity, though he did admit that his experience helped him prepare for working with troubled youth.

**Daily Grind**

The coaching profession can be attractive and financially lucrative to aspiring coaches, but my conversations frequently discussed the daily grind that comes from working in this field. Jordan started his discussion of the work week by saying, “During the year, I'm up at about 4:30.” The 4:30am wake-up time was essentially a consistent time for participants to start their days. Justin said, “A day for me as a coach is a lot like Groundhog Day to be honest with you, especially in-season. We practice in the morning so generally I'm usually up around 4:30. In the office by 5:15 to 5:30.” The early start to the day is just part of a busy work week, regardless of whether a coach is in-season or out-of-season, which has responsibilities that vary across the
positions held my each individual. For example, Chad reflected on his past experience as a graduate assistant and the time management skills he needed to develop in order to be successful.

He said:

It was arduous. It was about 110 hours a week. We pretty much, between me and the other GAs, specifically, we had it calculated out, especially during the season, to be about 100 and 110 hours a week Sunday to Sunday... I had to be full-time in grad school and still do everything required of me for football. Needless to say, there was no second for downtime or second to breathe or relax or anything like that. It was a roller coaster. It was tough. It was hard. It was challenging. It was a steep learning curve but it's something that I would definitely not go back and change. I know I'm the coach I am today after being put through such a trial that was that experience. Just as a coach and just from an organizational standpoint, I'm able to juggle so much more at one time.

The graduate assistant experience was discussed as complicated due to the fact that these individuals must balance a variety of roles (e.g. coaching, student, and occasionally teaching).

The experiences of full-time coaches is no less arduous. Coaches have several seasons during the year – fall camp which leads into the season, winter recruiting season, spring ball practices, and summer workouts – that keep them occupied and busy. Bolo described the day-to-day life of coaches in a way that offered up a strong summary of what was gleaned from the other participants. Bolo stated:

You come to work early in the morning, you have 12 sometimes 16 hour days; it just depends on what part of the year it is. Now you're coming into work checking in early every day and the players are probably doing their training with strength coaches and what not, and whether you are an offensive or defensive coach you probably will have meetings for the most part of the day. During the day you might, depending on which day of the week it is, you might meet with your players in the morning for 30 or 45 minutes if it's during their week. Depending on what time of the season it is, you might meet with them for less than an hour and if it’s spring practice, which it’s coming up for us, you might have a two hour practice with those guys, or if it is in an off-season which is recruiting, you might not see them at all because you’ll be out on the road, pretty much. You try to check in with your guys, leave a text message or email, just to know how they’re doing, if they’re in the study hall, checking to make sure they're taking care of the academics. Most of your days are consumed by being in your office, meeting with the other coaches, game planning, going over recruits, looking at a future player that you want to try to go out on the road and recruit to bring into the program. It all depends on what part of the year we’re talking about, it’s broken down, depending on the seasons it's
broken down in different sections. You're in fall, you’re in season. Winter, you’re recruiting. Spring, you got spring ball and it’s called a dead period where you can’t even go out on the road and you’re limited on how much time you get to see your players, as you only can see them so many hours out of a week. You’re limited on that and you can’t do anything with them until spring football actually starts. When spring football starts there’s still a certain amount of hours that you keep, that you get to see them, but it’s just a year-round thing.

As Bolo discussed, the typical day for a coach varies depending on the season. During the season, coaches focus on film review and game planning. Chase said that “Once I got the game plan down, I start preparing for my meetings with my players to get them ready. Plan my week, what I'm going to be doing with my players, know how the drills are going to go.” Planning and preparation are key tasks of the job during the season, which Chase said typically means “not leaving until after 9pm, 10pm, or 11pm.” During the winter season, when coaches are out recruiting, Chase articulated that coaches are on the road during the week and return only for weekend recruitment visits; this involves prospects coming to campus. Otherwise, he said that coaches’ spend their time, “Going around to high schools trying to make our final pitches and then off to try to look for future recruits then come back on the weekend and do our official visits.”

Finally, Brian connected the need to grind through the daily tasks of coaching with his racial identity. At his current institution, Brian said “of all the support staff, the graduate assistants and quality control guys, really I'm the only minority.” After realizing this he noted that he must “do his part” to show that Black coaches have the work ethic and ability to make it in the coaching profession.

**Coaching Mentorship**

The last subtheme of Coaching Experiences focused on the mentors and mentorship process encountered by these coaches. Considering the importance of accumulating social capital through networking in coaching, those who have jobs typically have a large network of friends
and peers from which they either lean on for advice or mentor themselves. Considering the lack of Black coaches in college football, the mentorship process, and subsequently receiving quality guidance are key components of a coach’s success. Bolo categorized the ideal mentorship process as striving to “understand who the individuals are and making it personal.” In addition to understanding each person as his own individual, John said that, “When I think of a coaching mentor, I think of guys that have longevity, so that you can make it and you can keep fighting, keep pursuing, and eventually…that dream that you're trying to live for can come true.” Of note, before getting too much into a discussion of the mentorship process, the words of John should be considered. He said:

I’m pretty sure a lot of the White coaches, growing up, may have that because of their fathers, their uncles, and people that they know that are already in the profession. You don’t have many second-generation or third-generation Black football coaches but there are first, second, and third generation White football coaches. You get in a profession that would be no different than if your dad was a lawyer or your dad was a doctor, you would think, “Hey, maybe I'll pursue that career.”

His comment shines a light on the face that White coaches may receive more mentorship from family members that have coached before. Historically, the inability of Black men to be hired as coaches may impact the next generation of aspiring Black coaches. White coaches may be viewed as a “legacy” type based solely on their connections to a famous relative. That connection may 1) open doors for them that a Black coach is unlikely to get, and 2) help them view coaching as a viable career.

The mentorship for aspiring coaches tends to start at the high school level and then building throughout one’s playing career. EJ, the most experienced interviewee, first mentioned his high school coach when we discussed mentors. He said, “I would say, my high school coach was a strong role model and a good person that taught me leadership. I didn't have a good relationship with my dad so he filled that void.” EJ was not alone in seeing his football coach as
both a mentor and a father figure, as AJ expressed a similar viewpoint when reflecting on how he viewed his head coach in college. AJ said, “He was a father figure that I really, truly-- I had a stepdad growing up, but I think my coach-- you spend so much time as a student athlete, being around the coach, they become your father figure.” He would later comment that he learned a lot of important transferrable skills from his head coach in college saying, “I learned so much from him as far as discipline, being on time, being responsible, being accountable, and things of that nature.”

Going to back to the importance of high school coaches, Bolo extended his mentorship to include both coaches and teachers. He said:

Well, obviously my high school football and track coaches were people that I leaned on. My middle school math teacher was the one that really inspired me and gave me the confidence to get into coaching. He, later on, became an administrator. He’s the one that encouraged me get into coaching. Seeing myself wanting to really go back and give some of the same information that was passed on to me and give that back to the people.

Bolo received mentorship from his coaches and teachers, which was similar to what John experienced. In his case, the math teacher was replaced by a physical education teacher, and John offered more insight into why that particular teaching position is important in the high school coaching profession. John said:

The only role model that I would have in coaching would be my high school coach, but he was a PE teacher. You don’t look at it as, "Oh, I want to be a professional coach", so you have a lot of Black men who grow up in that area, a lot of them become PE teachers and stuff like that because even coaching in high school, that profession is, "Oh, you become a teacher first." That was one of the first things that I thought about, like, “Oh, you know what? I would like to coach high school football.” Then, you find out there’s no money in it, so it’s like, "Oh, okay. Well, I've got to be a teacher-- I've got to be a teacher as well.'

So Bolo, EJ, and John, among others, were all greatly impacted by their high school coaches and teachers. These types of individuals were commonly discussed, but paled in comparison to the
conversations that centered around the impact that college coaches made on the lives of participants.

The college coach that participants spend the most time with tends to be their position coach, as that is the individual that directly oversees their development. Chase and Jordan both viewed their position coaches as older brother type figures. Chase said, “He is like this older brother type of mentor that’s makes sure that I do my best and guides me through this experience”, and Jordan said, “He's more of like an older brother in a sense when it's all said and done, because I know that with or without football we'll always be pretty close.” Ricky also articulated that his position coach served as his inspiration for getting into coaching and feeling as if he had a support system to succeed. He said, “being able to have him kind of helped me navigate college and grow as a man throughout my college career was kind of what made me gravitate to coaching even more so because of the really good relationship with him.” Thus, it is clear that position coaches, whether they are aware of it or not, serve as coaching mentors and big brother figures for aspiring Black coaches, and potentially all players overall regardless of race.

Extending beyond position coaches, the head coach was also discussed as an important mentor. EJ remarked that he learned a lot from his head coach when he said, “He coached people with respect. Not all coaches do it that way. Being a Christian, Catholic guy, he preached what he talked about. He and my position coach showed me how you treat the fans, how to treat the players.” Thus, beyond learning how to coach, EJ also learned how to communicate with others from his mentor. Michael, a wide receivers coach that has 15+ years of coaching experiences and is in his late 30s, offered a great picture of the impact that his head coach has had on his
development as a professional, while also adding in a little bit about his experience with the NFL’s Bill Walsh Minority Internship program. He said:

My coach in college, and he's been a small college coach his whole career, but he was just a good mentor, just in terms of being able to-- He was the one who told me, "Hey, if you don't want to coach Division III, don't do it because you'll get stuck." I was around a Black NFL head coach during one my coaching internships. He was good to be around because he was not a typical rah, rah, loudest coach in the room, saying “I will demand respect by fear and intimidation." I thought that was pretty cool because I'm similar. It just reinforced the fact that you could make it and be a head coach and be that way and not have to do it the other way. I always appreciated that, just being around him.

Some participants discussed how they felt compelled to mentor other coaches, especially when they had received quality mentorship themselves. They discussed the idea of opening doors for others, or engaging in racial uplift. For example, Aaron said, “I definitely have been a mentor to my coaching tree. I always tell my guys to reach down and pull one up. If every coach took that philosophy, I think we'll be in a lot better position.” Bolo echoed that sentiment when he discussed coaching as a business, saying, “It’s important that we understand this is a business…and if you're in a position to excel in this business then help bring people up with you.”

Aaron’s “reach down and pull one up” and Bolo’s “bring people up with you” comments seem to suggest that mentorship is about more than helping those around you, in that a good mentor engages in racial uplift where they help to open the door for other aspiring Black coaches. It should be noted that a lot of participants, even those with entry level jobs, expressed that they attempt to be mentors to aspiring Black coaches. Jordan mentioned “I've tried to do it (mentorship) with student assistants the best I can. I try to do it with GA's that haven't been working as long as me.” Jordan was a graduate assistant trying to “pull one up”, which was encouraging to hear.
Finally, consideration should be given to the race of mentors and their mentees. Some, like Bolo for example, had only Black mentors assisting them. Others, like Chad for example, discussed how the overwhelming majority of their mentors were other Black coaches. Chad claimed that “If I had to put a percentage to it, I’d say about 80:20. I do have a lot of coaching mentors or a handful I could say that are White, but predominantly they are Black.” The majority of coaches had mentor groups racially similar to Chad. Lastly, coaches like Justin described having a more evenly mixed group. He said:

Mixed. I think there is a little bit of us, as a Black coach just because there are so few of us. I think there is a little bit of a gravitation toward each other. With that being said, I think that there are so many-- just because there are so many White coaches that you learn a ton from those guys just because generally that's going to be most of the staff.

The fact that college football coaching is a predominately White profession might lead one to believe that Black coaches may have a lot of White mentors, but that did not come through in my conversations. That may be the result of Black coaches “gravitating towards each other” as Justin suggested. From a social capital standpoint, this would result in Black coaches have a lot of similar race network connections, which may impact their career mobility.

**Theme 3: Career Aspirations**

The third theme that emerged from the data centered on the career aspirations of the participants. The underrepresentation of Black coaches is frequently discussed in regards to the head coach position at the DI-FBS level of play. None of the participants in this study currently occupy that position, but conversations touched on several subthemes such as career goals upon entering the field and how those may or may not have changed, how their observations as players impacted their view of coaching being a realistic profession, the sponsorship and support they are afforded by their supervisors, and a strong desire to be a trailblazer in the coaching profession.
Career Goals

The majority of participants have measurable and specific goals for what they would like to do in their career, both in terms of progression and final career landing spot. For instance, Ricky would like to end up coaching at his alma mater, and break the tread of coaches using his school as a stepping stone job. He stated, “I want to build something here.” Brandon wants to spend time building his knowledge of the game, saying, “Right now, I'm just trying to do my best to learn my position group, trying to learn the ins-and-outs of coaching.” He joked that “Right now, I'm still drinking out of a water hose, a fire hose, rather”, when discussing his development as a coach. Chris admitted that, similar to Brandon, he still has a lot he needs to learn. He also discussed how the decision to become a coordinator or head coach will significantly impact his family, so he wants to make sure that they are on-board before he pursues higher profile posts. Essentially noting that head coaches become celebrities and their families are monitored accordingly.

Most participants are optimistic, while others shared that they have their reservations, and are not wanting to get their hopes up. Some like Eddie, indicated he was just happy to have a full-time position. He said, “For the longest time, I just wanted to work full-time in coaching and make a good living, honestly…I never really had it in my head to work up to Division I-- to be one of the nine, one of the ten.” Rather than having a lofty goal, he just wanted to make enough to support himself and his family. Bolo expressed a similar sentiment, as he claimed:

Right now, I’m just blessed to be part of a program that is going to come up and try to effect and change lives. I’m really happy to be involved with the whole process. Lot of people ask me that all the time. I didn’t get to this level to be looking around, to move around and any other stuff. I have family here, and I’m just enjoying the process right now.

Eddie and Bolo both were happy and complacent with their current roles, as Eddie’s goal was to get a full-time job that paid well, and Bolo enjoyed being in the profession after previously
working in another industry. Others, like Aaron, expressed frustration with the process. When Aaron was asked what his career goals are he said “I don't know. Right now, I'm trying to figure it out because it shouldn't have taken me long to get here.” Just as Aaron expressed frustration with his coaching trajectory, Michael also described how hard work is not always rewarded in a field that is often very political and filled with cliques. He said:

What I've learned is it's not about your resume, it's really not about your experiences to a certain degree. It's more, um, political, I guess would be the easy answer; so much of it has not anything to do with football. I guess part of me has come to the fact that I don't even think that far ahead anymore. I think being a coordinator would be great. That's my short-term goal, but I just think being a head coach seems to be almost-- I don't know. I don't want to say luck, but it is almost you've just got to be at the right place at the right time. The right guy to get the right job. So little has to do with your ability. It just seems it's-- I don't want to say not attainable, but I don't know what else to say. [Laughs]

The fact that coaching is a profession in which individuals look out for their friends, and most coaches are predominately White, creates an environment that may discourage Black coaches working towards advancing in their careers. Regarding advancement, nine coaches actually have a set career goal that they would like to achieve. EJ already achieved his goal, and he discussed how that goal changed over time. He commented:

My goals, probably early on, I wanted to be a coordinator. The longer I coached, I wanted to go to NFL. That became my main goal. Go to the NFL. I did have a chance to go there. My goal wasn't to be a head coach.

Accomplishing his goal of working in the NFL was something that he is quite proud of, and it is also something that some of his peers discussed. Brian stated that “I'd like to be a college head coach one day. It's difficult. I know that. If I can get in the NFL, I guess I would try to get into the NFL too.” AJ also discussed how his career goal has changed, after obtaining his current position, to work in the NFL, saying:

I would love to coach my position in the NFL one day. My aspirations were always to be an NFL player. That didn't work out, so now I'm coaching Division I. My goal was to be
a Division I coach by the time I'm 40. I achieved that goal. Now, like I said, someday I would love coach my position in the NFL.

The NFL is the highest level of football competition, which makes it a logical next step for many Black coaches seeking a professional challenge. Additionally, several participants remarked that the NFL seems to embrace diversity in the coaching profession more so than the college game.

Going back to the college game, several participants expressed an interest to move up the organizational ladder and become a coordinator and then a head coach. Ricky discussed how he hopes to methodically do so when he said:

I want to grow as a position coach for some time, just to help myself develop as a coach and help me learn the overall scheme of things. Then, essentially move up to being an offensive coordinator and after that go on to become a head coach.

Chase expressed a similar sentiment when he said, “One day be an offensive coordinator and then eventually a head coach.” Lastly, also on the offensive side of the ball, John talked about his career goals, but first he started with a caveat. John stated:

I think that mine are-- I don't want to say are unrealistic, but I want it all. I would like to be a head coach; definitely, eventually, to make it there but also, would like to be an offensive coordinator. I definitely have that ambition.

Though obtaining a head coaching job is a lofty goal, not everyone is aiming for that title. Chad, a current high school coach, just wants an opportunity to return to the college game. He commented that “My expectation was to stay in college. Hoping that's where I see myself finishing out my career. That's the plan.” He had difficulty obtaining another collegiate job so he went back to the high school ranks, which was not an easy decision. He noted that “At one point, it was a little gut wrenching for me I would say. It was just a blow to the chest that I couldn't find work at any of the levels, for that matter.”

James would like to move from his position as a Group of Five coach into a Power 5 program. He also noted that for Black coaches that aspire to be head coaches, they may have to
take a position at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) if they want an opportunity to lead a program. He stated:

My goal right now, hopefully one day, is just take that next step. Get into a Power 5 Conference. That’s my goal. Getting into a Power 5 Conference. Now, let’s say for us now you try to get into Power 5 Conference or do you go back and try to take a HBCU job, just so you can get a chance to run to your own program. You take a head job at an HBCU. Just so you can say I’ve been a head coach before.

Clearly, the majority of participants have defined what they would like to accomplish in their careers. Despite each having their own unique experiences, their end goals are mostly similar. Now, the challenge is navigating the politics and institutional discrimination involved in coaching to ensure that they can achieve those goals. For those that are frustrated with the process, it is important that they find support to continue striving towards their goals. Statements like “it should not have taken this long” and “it might be unrealistic” are concerning remarks to hear from active coaches. Furthermore, it seems that most coaches have aspirations of moving on to the next step, whether that be obtaining a coordinator position or moving up in terms of level of competition. The idea of being a head coach at the DI-FBS level is intriguing to many, but they also acknowledge that they need to occupy a coordinator position, or take a promotion at a lower level, first.

**Player Reflections**

Aspiring to be a head coach in a predominantly White profession is potentially an ambitious goal, as teams have historically shown that they do not value Black men in that role (Agymang & DeLorme, 2010). Considering that all of the participants in this study played college football, one topic of conversation shifted towards their awareness of the racial discrepancy in coaching hires during their playing careers. Especially for those that are relatively younger, their ability to discuss how their playing experiences either encouraged or discouraged them from pursuing this path was of interest. Ricky remarked that “There's always been-- you
could always tell how there's not as many African-American coaches in college football or in professional football.” Chris also said he noticed the discrepancy, claiming that when he played it was worse than it is now. He also recalled that, at least from his perspective as a player that “It was almost like an accepted thing.” His awareness peaked when he realized how excited he and his teammates were to have a new position coach hired prior to his senior year that was Black man.

Whereas Ricky and Chris were conscious of the racial discrepancy on coaching staffs, some coaches discussed how they were unaware and why. For instance, John said:

You're not conscious of it, it’s the norm. You’re not as conscious about it as much as you would be if you were into politics. Even at that age, you’re not thinking about it as much as you’re thinking about, "Okay, this is where I'll play at, this is who the coaches are" Because a lot of the kids you play with, even in high school, they had White coaches. I was just one of the few people, in high school, that had a Black coach. Going into college-- because I never thought that I wanted to be a coach, you have these other dreams because you don’t even know that coaching is an option growing up.

Essentially, John is arguing that view of White men in coaching has become institutionalized, and that young Black athletes are aware of it. The impact of this viewpoint would keep athletes from challenging the norm (e.g. believing they should be coached by Black men), and later attempting to break it (e.g. pursuing a career in coaching). Also, “you have these other dreams” speaks to the fact that players may focus more on a potential professional career as an athlete over coaching. He spoke more on that point later on when he said:

I just think that it’s not a career that we grow up wanting to pursue. I know just where I’ve come from, I didn't grow up saying, "I want to do that"; you grow up saying you want to be a player. You don’t grow up saying you want to be a coach or even know what it takes or what goes into being a coach.

His argument that “you grow up saying you want to be a player” gains a lot of support when it is aligned with the fact that many participants had a professional career, whether that be in the NFL, Canada, or other semi-professional leagues. Thus, it is unlikely that a Black athlete
pursuing a career as a professional football player will spend time dwelling on the racial make-up of college football coaches in comparison to the player pool.

**Occupational Sponsorship**

The coaching profession requires more than determination, hard work, and knowledge in order for someone to achieve their career goals. As Eddie noted, “It’s not a profession where you can come in and not have people backing you…the profession is really all about connections.” Coaches need mentors, and, perhaps more importantly, they need individuals that will advocate for or sponsor their career advancement. Having a network of coaches (e.g. social capital) that are willing to advocate for an aspiring coach is vital to having a career in the field. For example, Jordan recalled that his head coach told him “I know you’ve done a great job here. I’ve got some connections. If there's anything I can do I will.” Jordan’s coach also helped him and his fellow graduate assistant colleagues prepare for job interviews by conducting mock interviews with him. In reference to what these mock interviews looked like, Jordan said:

> It's random, so one day he may ask you to do things on the board, or he may just ask you do a presentation because no interview is the same. Some guys they take them to the board, and they want to see how they do X’s and O’s…That was something that he always did just to keep us on our toes.

Michael wished he would have been provided with more mock interview experiences, as he is not a fan of the NCAA’s preparation programs. He remembered some of the academy workshops that he attended, and why they were not beneficial. Essentially arguing that the skills being taught in those programs were not skills that White coaches possessed, and it did not seem to impede their ability to get jobs. He argued that occupational skill development workshops should cover important information, or else they are superfluous. He stated:

> The NCAA used to do the coaches academy where you'd go and they will tell you how to have a formal dinner. Which fork was the salad fork, how to have an interview - which is cool, but to me it was almost condescending. I've known some of these young White dudes that get these coordinator jobs. [Laughs] They didn't have these classes and none of
that mattered for them. That's where I've always been able to-- I don't know. I don't need to be told which fork is my salad fork and which one is my dinner fork. I need to be on tape interviewing, having mock interviews.

Jordan’s supervisor later delivered on his promise to help, by putting him in touch with the program he was working at during the time of our interview. Justin also indicated that his former coach was the one that put him in contact with different individuals, and that those conversations helped jumpstart his career. He remarked that “More than any industry, the idea of six degrees of separation is truer… you could put any coach on any staff then randomly any other coach on any other staff in America and you could connect them somehow.” Jordan also provided some insight into what the “putting in a good word” phone call typically look like. He said:

It's really just talking about the character of the person, I think, because you wouldn't make the call if you didn't think they could get the job done. You know what I mean? Then 9 times out of 10, if that goes beyond that they're going to talk the football aspect. What I've always done was talk about guys' character, talked about what type of person they are because as great as a coach that you want, you also want great people in the building. That's one of the things that people have done for me…Mainly when you call you want to talk a guy up whether or not you know what kind of man he is, because at the end of the day that's how you rise, I would say.

Chad agreed with Jordan that phone calls are important, but also discussed how the lack of Black coaches in the game might lead to a lack of mentors or sponsors. He stated:

But when there's so few minority coaches, let alone Black coaches, that are in places of hiring position or having some clout to be able to necessarily throw some weight around in order to get you in the door, it's even harder for young coaches, let alone a seasoned veteran, to try and find a way into a coaching staff.

That belief was echoed and reflected by Aaron when discussing his career. He referenced another coach that started at the same time he did, and how that individual has progressed through the profession more quickly. Aaron believes that this is because White coaches are given more opportunities and look out for one another. He said, “…opportunities are not given to us,

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and then the problem also is that White coaches look out for White coaches. The problem with us is that, as a whole, African-American coaches don't look out for other African-American coaches.” He claimed that this issue creates a “fighting a losing battle” scenario for Black coaches that are striving to enter into and advance along the various levels of the coaching profession.

Some examples did emerge of how Black coaches try to help one another. AJ talked about how he encourages aspiring Black coaches that reach out to him to take pride in building their network by being personal in their correspondences. He tells them to, “Write letters. Text. Call. Write notes. Notes go a long way. When you take that note and you actually write, hand write a message to someone and mail it that takes time investing in something. It takes pride.” Bolo challenges aspiring Black coaches to think about how they have branded themselves, as well as to evaluate the extent to which they are prepared for new opportunities. He asks them to answer questions such as:

What's your brand? How are you branding yourself? Do you feel that you've branded yourself properly? When you get in front of these different people, when they stop you to get an interview, you're not overwhelmed, you're not unprepared, you're ready to go, you're locked and loaded, you're ready to put your best foot forward. You have the mindset of, regardless of the color of my skin, you can't deny me because I am the best candidate for this job.

Building a brand and networking are important for coaches, as those might be the two things that get you hired. Michael mentioned that the respect this peers have for him is what has landed him the positions he has held. He said, “I’ve always kind of felt I'm kind of unique because I've never gotten a job-- I've never worked for a head coach that knew me or that I coached with beforehand.” His job opportunities have always come through referrals that could speak highly of him as a brand. Additionally, that respect has landed him promotions within the programs he has worked for in the past.
Lastly, Jordan made a comment that both explained why Black coaches may not support one another and touched on the importance of coaches investing in the career development of their assistants. He said:

It's turned into winning isn't enough anymore. I think that when you see guys that go 10-3 lose their jobs, it takes away the perspective of what I'm in it for and what I should be doing. What I mean by that is as a head coach-- I haven't been a head coach, but I see it. When a guy goes 10-3 and he's still worrying about either his next job or whether he'll keep this one, it's hard to advance guys.

The coaching profession is extremely competitive and filled with constant annual turnover, see the 21 jobs that were opened prior to the start of the 2017 season. As Jordan referenced, this may impede head coaches from advocating for, or sponsoring, their assistants coaches, since in times of turmoil they may be more focused on saving their own job (or preparing to look for a new one) over advancing their assistants. Some participants discussed what Jordan mentioned, and to an extent they all understood his observation to be a reality of the coaching profession. However, several noted that an outcome of this is the lack of “Black coaching trees”. These networks do not exist, which disadvantages Black coaches when considering the strong “White coaching trees” that are available to their counterparts.

**Being a Trailblazer**

In addition to aspiring to advance their own careers, participants in this study have a strong a desire to leave the profession a better place for future Black coaches. Several participants discussed how they believe that their success is key to breaking down barriers that have historically prevented Black coaches from getting coaching jobs. The profession is not always easy, as AJ commented “Obviously, coaching is a great job, but a shitty business.” Black coaches do not always get a lot of opportunities, or the best jobs, so there is a real sense that they need to make the most of the ones you do get, both for one’s own professional development and
the future opportunities that may or may not be afforded to aspiring Black coaches. AJ continued:

I think it's important for guys like myself to put their best foot forward, because we are a minority. When you're given an opportunity, I don't like to see, I don't want to see guys waste it. I don't want to see guys’ waste an opportunity, man. I think you're only given so many opportunities, you either take advantage of them, or not take advantage of them.

Brian had similar thoughts on putting his best foot forward. He said, “I got to keep going hard and if I get an opportunity to prove myself and my worth, I got to do well.” He also noted that Black coaches must outperform, rather than satisfactorily meet, the expectations placed upon them when they are given chances. This will open the opportunities for others, he said:

If I'm a defensive backs coach and I'm up against someone equal in position, I've got to outdo them because that's the only way that I'm going to create a platform by which more people in my position will be hired. I think that, not saying that it's on James Franklin to go win the national championship, I hope that my school wins the national championship, but for people in my position, I need for guys like James Franklin and Charlie Strong to do really good so that 20 years from now, somebody can say, "Hey, it's been done.” Obviously there's good coaches out there, it doesn't matter what color they are.

Jordan, like AJ and Brian, strongly believes that there is pressure on all current Black coaches, regardless of their coaching level, to excel. He mentioned that rather than thinking negatively and subscribing to a “this won’t happen mentality”, that Black coaches “just got to continue doing good jobs because you have to break down these barriers, and in this sport, you have to do it consequently enough by winning.”

Those that have taken advantage of their coaching opportunities are already serving as inspirations to current Black coaches. Chris highlighted how East Carolina University head coach Scottie Montgomery might be seen as encouraging to some. He said, “Coach Scottie Montgomery is a great man, great coach. Young African American head coach at 38. Role model for young African American coaches.” Montgomery’s status as a young Black coach, with an
offensive background, made him someone that gave confidence to young Black coaches that are trying to reach his level.

Now that a few Black coaches have broken through, a lot of conversation centered-around the idea that these men need to be successful, which means winning a national title. Chad thought back to his youth and recalled:

I've always said since high school, I wanted to be the first Black head coach to win an FBS National championship. To be the first Black coach to win it at the FBS level or if nothing else I want to be the first at the Division II level or for that matter try and do something special.

Winning a title, and building a consistent national contender, will help remove the stigma that Black coaches cannot win the big one. Several interviewees mentioned that if you asked the general public to list the best White coaches they would be able to provide several names, but that they might struggle to do the same with Black coaches. Thus, it is important for Black coaches to succeed and enter into that conversation, as doing so may open the door for other Black coaches to receive similar jobs.

**Theme 4: Racial Inequality**

The fourth theme that emerged from the data centered on racial inequality in the coaching profession. Participants were aware prior to our interview that this topic was one of the focal points of this research inquiry. The varied experiences amongst the participants, both in terms of time spent in the profession and positions held, led to diverse conservations. Overall, the majority of conversations touched upon the subthemes of racial inequality; such as the existence of inner circles in the coaching profession, the role of finances in sustaining the discrepancy, references to the challenges that they/other colleagues have encountered, the role that race plays in their profession, the role that decision-making stakeholders play in their profession, and continual references to stacking in terms of positions held by Black coaches.
Before discussing those subthemes, it is important to consider what James said about Black men in coaching. He said, “You don’t want handouts. You just want equal opportunity.” These men do not feel entitled to jobs in college football, they just want an opportunity to succeed or fail. They feel that White coaches are afforded that opportunity, and that those who fail continue to receive more chances. My interviewees just want an opportunity to pursue their passions while receiving equitable treatment.

The Inner Circle

The first subtheme on racial inequality focused on discussing the current discrepancy. At the time of the interviews, the most recent TIDES College Sport Race and Gender Report Card stated that, at the DI-FBS level, 53.8 percent of players, 26.6 percent of the assistant coaches, and 12.5 percent of head coaches were Black. These statistics were shared with participants in order to frame the current discrepancy. They were then asked to provide their own commentary on why the numbers reflect such a stark difference between the player pool and the coaching pool.

Of course, some of the reasons for the discrepancy can be extrapolated from previously cited comments, such as John’s discussions of how Black players might focus more on a professional career than their White counterparts, and how White coaches may benefit from having generational connections to the coaching profession. Chad added additional support to the idea that generational connections help White coaches get jobs. He recalled on his past interview experiences and the individuals that were hired. He recalled:

I was passed over for a graduate assistant job at Power 5 after my time as a GA at another school. I was told, after a great interview, I was told I didn't have enough experience to be a graduate assistant after playing four years of college and one full year as a graduate assistant at the FCS level, but then when they announced their hires, I saw that one of the GAs that they hired was the son of one of the coaches on staff, and another GA they hired had never coached at all.
Aaron also observed how family connections helped get the sons of Bill Parcells, Bill Walsh, and Charlie Weis into the coaching profession. Several interviewees referenced the recent promotion of Charlie Weis Jr. to the offensive coordinator role at Florida Atlantic University, with the consensus being that the man might be able to coach, but had not paid his dues as much as the majority of them had. Nepotism for White coaches definitely was suggested as one way to explain the discrepancy.

Black coaches are impacted by White coaches hiring within their inner-circles in more ways than just familiar connections. Michael, for instance, discussed how his personal development as a coach stagnates when he is forced to work under a coordinator that lacks superior credentials and might have only gotten the job because he is a friend of the coach. He commented:

…when you're in a room where you're not getting better because the guy that's in charge isn’t very good at his job and really only got it for reasons other than football, then that's more frustrating. Which is probably more the case for a lot of coaches of color because there are a lot of guys that just never get the opportunity. Ever. That's just every day.

Thus, his words suggest that the professional development of Black coaches is stunted when they are not working with head coaches and/or coordinators that challenge them to grow, which in-turn would keep Black coaches, and really all assistants, from progressing towards their career goals. Unfortunately, the “buddy system” – described by TJ – helps to keep White coaches gainfully employed regardless of their prior failures. TJ commented that:

Like I said, it’s a buddy system. A lot of these coaches are great friends. They go out and compete every Saturday and they’re trying to beat each other, but it’s just for the score of the game. A lot of these coaches are friends and they look out for each other and they definitely try to keep their friends in the loop when it comes to these jobs. As you can see a lot of us Blacks and other minorities were not just a part of that circle.

His words show that Black coaches are hurt by the strong relationships that White coaches have amongst themselves. Strong efforts are made to “keep their friends in the loop when it comes to
these jobs.” To that point, John commented that the lack of a watchdog-type group hurts Black coaches because they do not have the same fraternity keeping them in the loop once they lose a job. He said, “There is not a union or a group of Black coaches who are going to make sure that Black coaches keep jobs…because when you are out, you are out. It's hard to find another job.”

Brian also commented on the White inner-circle and its staying power in college football. He said:

It is very difficult because you have a lot of older coaches because coaches can stay around for longer than some industries. In some industries, people tap out at 50, 52, or 53--coaches will go to close to 70. It may hurt some of the younger population coming in because they stay in the business and will stay employed. They have friends in the business. But it is what it is. I understand the dynamics of it and it's the industry I chose.

The fact that college football coaches can work into their late 60s and early 70s helps to continue the loop of Whites in power hiring other Whites coaches, as there is no ushering out of the old guard. Additionally, this loop can create an environment in which White coaches are not aware of Black coaches to hire. Chris said that he has “been in situations like that, where a Caucasian coach just doesn't even know enough African American coaches. I know a million of them that are looking for jobs.” Thus, White coaches may not necessarily be discriminating against Black coaches when they choose not to hire them, rather they just do not have Black coaches in their networks to employ.

Brian also stated that he believes there is a lack of Black coaches because, “in the modern era of football, the trend is very heavily in favor of offensive coaches right now. So that doesn't help minorities.” Michael provided a detailed and thorough reasoning for the lack of Black coaches in prominent offensive coaching roles, using the NFL’s promotion structure as an example. He said:

If you look at the formula in the NFL is you hire a young White dude as a quality-control coach that guy works directly with the quarterback because he gets all the information.
He's doing all the data input, putting stats together, doing all that. He's got all the information. When the quarterback needs the information, if I’m telling Peyton Manning, what they're doing on 2nd and 8 because here's the breakdown of it, then I get Peyton Manning’s stamp of approval. The quality control guys, they move up and become quarterback guys and then they move up and become coordinators and then ultimately, head coach. That's why there's no Black quarterback coaches in the NFL because they don't have any Black quality control coaches.

The same principles apply to the college game. In order to see more minority coaches there must first be more minorities in the feeder positions (e.g. graduate assistants and quality control coaches). Until those numbers improve, Black pipelines into premium positions will be scarce, which will result in a perpetuation of the status quo. Regardless of whether the position is on the offensive or defensive side, increases in minorities holding entry-level positions will help improve the discrepancy.

**Financial Considerations**

The second subtheme of racial inequality involved discussions of how money may help to perpetuate the continued racial discrepancy in college football coaching. Eddie made some discouraging, but also noteworthy, comments as to why it may be difficult to get Black individuals plugged into entry-level coaching positions. He said, “You hear the question all the time. ‘Why don’t we see a lot of minorities?’ It’s because they can't afford to be in it.” The cost of starting out in the profession was a passionate topic for him. He highlighted that although coaching can be a financially lucrative profession that is only the case for those that have full-time jobs. Initially, when working in entry level positions, individuals usually survive on small stipends ($10k) which might be difficult to live on for Black athletes that are transitioning out of playing. Consider Eddie’s words:

All you have to do is look at the kids that play the game. If you look at the demographics. I'm not a sociology major, I'm not a sociologist or any of those sort of things, but I've been working in this sport for a long time, and the majority of young men that play the sports generally don't come for money. Obviously, I don't have numbers to back it up and percentages and all that sort of stuff, but there's a reason why there are a lot of kids out
there that are begging for a scholarship because they don't have the money to go to college.

For those Black athletes who come from low-income backgrounds, working for a few years on a stipend may be a struggle. Eddie notes that some might choose to get a regular job, especially if they are trying to support a family, or that, “They [minorities] simply can't do it. Unless, mom and dad are kicking you money and helping you out.” Black athletes, some of which come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, might struggle to get into coaching because they do not have families that can support them during their first few years in the profession.

In addition to a lack of financial resources, Brian mentioned that the money made by a lot of Black coaches may also be an issue when discussing advocacy. In terms of current Black coaches serving as advocates for positive social change, he commented “if you're at a big-time school, making $250,000 a year supporting your family doing well for yourself, trying to kick in or break the glass ceiling of an industry that you've already broken into maybe is not your cause.” For the minorities that have found success in the coaching profession, “rocking the boat”, or causing disruption, may seem like an unwise decision. Also, they may not experience the same issues as those that are still attempting to make it in the field. They may even be unaware of a glass ceiling that needs kicked in.

The last comment made about money came from Michael. He spoke about how the coaching salaries for a position coach at the DI-FBS level make dropping down to pick-up a promotion difficult, noting “If some DI-FBS guy is coaching receivers and making $200K, and Louis and Clarke called and said, ‘Hey, I want you to be the head coach and I will pay you $70K.’ Guys are not going do that.” To that end, Black coaches might need to consider taking pay cuts if they want to advance.
Taking a pay cut, or dropping down to a non DI-FBS post (e.g. FCS, DII, DIII, NAIA, etc.) to secure a full-time position, is something that Eddie talked about. He referenced HBCUs and the security that can be found in holding a position at one of those institutions. Eddie remarked:

…you get a lot of coaches that go to Black college football because they can't get the opportunity to be a coordinator, to be a head coach at the White schools. Right, wrong or indifferent, it's just simply the truth. Like you said the numbers bare it out. You get guys at football in the MEAC, or the SWAC, or they go to the SIAC because there's a chance for you to be full-time, which is another thing that is hard for Black coaches to get, to get a full time position.

Although coaching at a HBCU might not be as financially lucrative or prestigious as working at a DI-FBS program, the trade-offs appear to help make-up the difference.

In summary, the White inner-circle, the lack of minorities in entry level positions, and financial issues were all discussed as reasons for why the player pool and coaching pool do not mirror one another. Aaron and TJ both mentioned the historical and political climate of the United States as being reasons. Aaron discussed how Whites are given more leeway because “We live in America,” and TJ said that, “the division is the most visible that it’s ever been since the civil rights movement and things of that sort.” Those statements reflect upon the idea that racism is institutionalized in America, and is then subsequently embedded in the governance of college football.

**Career Advancement**

The third subtheme on racial inequality focused on challenges that coaches encounter in finding jobs and the struggles that typically come with the positions they do get. Brian mentioned that “…it’s a different progression for me as an African American.” This quote mirrored the mindset that several participants had regarding the ways their careers will evolve over time, which is heavily influenced by the challenges they will face.
One of the challenges that coaches encounter is an oversaturated job market. Eddie commented that, “the profession is getting worse and worse because there's more and more guys that are trying to get in.” He advises, and cautions, individuals that have a desire to enter into the coaching profession. He tells them:

Think long and hard about this. It's a commitment. If you really want to move your way up…if you have aspirations to get into that next level. It's going to be the long time before you work your way up there, because not everybody just falls into a GA at the Division I school. It doesn't happen anymore because there are too many guys trying to do it.

The market is saturated, and the process for moving up through the ranks can take some time. AJ also noted that the market’s oversaturated and feels as if he is closely monitored. He said, “I know people are really looking at me and watching closely. There are so many guys want my job, would want my job and obviously I'm blessed to have it.” Clearly, one challenge facing Black coaches, and all coaches really, is the oversaturated applicant pool of potential coaching candidates.

Additionally, Eddie commented that geographic location may also play a significant role in finding a job. He said that, “I just spent the last two years up north and tried like heck to get a full-time position up there and you couldn't really get past the initial conversation.” Although he was not willing to say that his race was the main reason, he did note that he “didn't see a lot of Black full-time coaches in that state” and that “It's just one of those things in certain parts of the country and in certain areas, as a Black man, it's hard to get a full-time position.” Chad, similarly, said:

One of the things that's always in the back of your mind when you're applying to some of these jobs as a minority coach is, "Well, what's the area like, or what is the climate?” Because if they've only seeing nothing but White coaches there is probably not a high chance that you'll even get a callback, even if you have a sparkling resume. It's one of those things that's in the back of your head when you start applying to jobs.
In addition to worrying about an area, Black coaches may also worry about broken promises or fake relationships. Several of the coaches in this study have coached at the high school level, and Aaron and Brian shared that head coaches at the college level attempted to court them just to recruit their players. Aaron said “I've had people promise me, ‘I'm going to give you a job. I'm going to give you a job.’ They get the player they want and you never hear from them again.” Brian said, “When you have a player, they know your number. When you don't have a player, obviously it's a ‘me’ based industry.” It would appear that Black coaches working at the interscholastic level are prime candidates to be courted by college coaches just for a recruit’s signature.

It is unfortunate that those promises and relationships do not lead to jobs, because it can be very challenging to find openings that are actually open. Brian mentioned that, “There’s a site called The Football Scoop…one of the jokes in the college football world is once it's scooped, it isn't scoop. Meaning, once it makes it on this website, it's not news. Meaning, people have known about that.” Chris also talked about how the jobs he has heard about traditionally come from someone in the know, and he also mentioned that good jobs are not going to be open for a long time. The argument is that filling positions in the coaching profession does not function like filling positions in traditional job markets; where a position will be posted, human resources will evaluate candidates, and then a search committee/supervisor will conduct interviews. The majority of positions are filled through networking.

For those individuals who are able to find employment, they may encounter additional challenges – such as being hired into potentially poor situations, feeling as though they have only one shot to succeed in their profession, and experiencing constant fear related to their job security. This effect is known as the glass cliff and it centers-around the idea that certain
positions lack the resources for individuals to be successful, but minority groups are offered, and they accept them because it is at least an opportunity.

In reference to bad situations, TJ talked about how coaches traditionally do not get opportunities at powerhouse programs, saying, “They [minorities] don’t get those options, they get like, smaller schools that…low budget, not a lot of scholarships and it's just hard to win, it’s hard to get back on the track and then they get lost in the shuffle.” James spoke to that when he discussed his passion for wanting Black coaches to get opportunities. He advocated for Black coaches to “get their feet at the table” while also issuing this remark: “When you get a chance to put your feet at the table, don’t get in the worst job in the fucking country.” Breaking into coaching is challenging enough without having to struggle through taking over a situation devoid of necessary resources.

The idea that Black coaches only get one shot to prove themselves, and that opportunity usually involves accepting a position at historically bad locations, was a common topic of discussion. Chris noted that there are only a finite number of jobs that are available: “…you've got to take whatever job you're given…you've got to do what you've got to do, and you've got to take it with the risk of, ‘If I don't make it, then that can be it.’” James also discussed the importance of making your first opportunity count because you most likely may never get another one. He said:

So when you get an opportunity, in your mind you've got to get the job done because you have never had this much money before. You have never had this opportunity before, so you've got to go way out and beyond to try to keep the opportunity. Because if you don't, you're never going to get another one.

The fear that “you’re never going to get another one,” was echoed by John. He said, “You got to know that with Black coaches, there's a fear. There's a fear of being fired. There's a fear of losing your job…You get fired and you never get a chance again.” Michael referred to this fear as “one-
and-done,” and extended it to include a discussion of where a Black coach’s career goes afterward, saying:

You go from being a head coach to a position coach. Where the White coaches go from being head coach to the coordinator and they get a chance to get back in that seat because if you get hot as a coordinator, you’re going to get head coaching job.

Building off of Michael’s comment, TJ offered a similar sentiment when he colorfully said, “Once we don’t succeed it's like we get lost in the shuffle. We'll go to a Southwestern Eastern and Southern Magnolia State Executive University that nobody knows about.” There seems to be consensus that Black coaches’ fall hard within the profession if they fail at their first position; dropping several levels on the coaching ladder.

It would be challenging enough to fear that your first opportunity was your only opportunity, but Black coaches also have to constantly worry about job security. John, after being told that the average Black coach’s tenure is three years, made a comment that included a depiction of what is happening during a Black coach’s third unsuccessful year on the job. He said:

Think about it like, in their third year, and you got to understand the psychological aspects of it. In their third year on the wire, you are on the hot seat. You are hearing all of the psychological issues and guess what the kids are hearing it too. So, everybody is in the hot seat so everybody's uneasy. That's a hard environment to work in. Meanwhile half of your coaching staff is out looking for other jobs. So, the third year becomes a wash. Because you're on your way out. Nobody thinks about that thing. You know that the ship is sinking and everybody is telling you that the ship is sinking. How many of these people do you think are standing there saying, "You know what? We going to go to down with this ship." Hell no. They all looking.

The picture John paints shows a coach worried about their job; the coaching staff has started looking elsewhere for work and the players are acutely aware that their coach may be fired. The assistants should not be blamed either, because as Jordan points out, the “‘I want to advance my staff” mindset isn't always there because a lot of head coaches are worrying about ‘am I even
going to be here.”” Whether it be the head coach or their assistants, the worry over one’s job security impacts all coaches and serves as one of the greatest challenges that Black coaches encounter.

**Perceived Impact of Race**

The fourth subtheme on racial inequality focused on the perceived impact of race on the coaching profession. Eddie articulated that “if you want to be a professional in the world, racism's just part of it”, and his words were echoed by other participants. The main points that were discussed relating to this subtheme were threefold: discussions of the role race plays in how participants present themselves, the battle to fight negative stereotypes, and continuously being labeled with the ‘recruiter’ role.

Participants were asked, “Do you believe that your identity as a Black man impacts your job?” Interviewees felt that race did impact their jobs, with mostly negative outcomes. Chad said, “Without question. I do believe that.” We then discussed how he has been passed over in the past by less qualified, based on resume, candidates. Chase offered another reason for why Black coaches might get passed over for certain jobs; they are pursuing a position outside of the norm for Black men. He said:

I think that it [race] hurts in trying to coach a different position that is not my own…It's not my own position, meaning it's not the normal approach in that position, let alone playing that position. There's also dangers of the position that I am in. You'll see more minority candidates in my position.

Essentially, Chase argues that Black coaches are stereotyped into certain roles. Eddie noted that getting passed over for jobs and being stereotyped is just the reality for Black men in coaching. He offered a thoughtful view on this situation, in which he claimed that complaining will not lead to change. He said:

It's just as a Black male you can't be mad about that sort of stuff because it's just the way of the world. The millennials they want to protest and bang on the table, "This isn't right",
you cannot like it, it's not right, not by any means, but it's the way it is. We can try to fight against it, that's fine. If you want to work in the field it's just something you have to kind of, "Hey, it's something I got to deal with, I'm going to deal with it, and move on", sort of stuff. It happens all the time in coaching. It happens in any field really, but in coaching it's very prevalent.

Racism is pervasive throughout American society, and Eddie is not saying that is okay, but he is essentially asking for coaches to come to a point of acceptance. He believes that they will be better off if they acknowledge it and move on. Michael discussed how sport mirrors society, and that Black coaches must go to extreme lengths if they want to fit into the White culture that exists in the coaching profession. He stated:

Sports are just like society. All the same issues that exist in society exist in sports. There's a certain way that you're supposed to be because the people around you need to feel comfortable. The way you talk, the way you interact with people, the things that you care about, the music you listen to. All that stuff depends on where you work or who you're around. It's something you always got to be consciously thinking about. Every place is different, every situation is different. I don't know that there is a minority coach in the country that doesn't think that way.

The idea that Black coaches must act a certain way in order to make those around them feel comfortable exemplifies one of the more important issues associated with being Black in the coaching profession.

Attempting to combat the expectations that are imposed on you might result in a minority coach being labeled as “the mad Black man” or “the angry Black man” which was commonly discussed. Aaron talked about this label and how those in power might view it as an excuse, or a blame someone else mentality. This view is inaccurate and he attempted to clear it up when he said:

We get judged by, "We're a mad Black man, we're mad at the world" concept and I don't know if you know what that concept is, you may not know because this is probably not spoken of by Caucasians. It is prescribed to us because when things happen to us, we always blame and point. I don't blame anybody. It is what it is. I can't change the things that have happened. All I can do is just try to do the best that I can do, and hopefully the man upstairs is going to take care of me.
Aaron was not alone in thinking that he would be judged for being discontent with how things had developed in his career. Michael shared similar views. In both cases these men decided that they wanted to be authentic, rather than adopt a prescribed role. Aaron said, “I am not going to kiss ass,” and Michael said:

I think that's a lot of people's realities and then there's people like me who go, "Fuck it. I'm going to be me and if you don't like me, then fire me." I've been fortunate to be around people that appreciate me for me, but there are a lot of... when I was at another school, part of the reason why I left was because the head coach didn't like the way I was. He didn't think I was demonstrative enough. He didn't think I was loud enough. In the end, that was really his issue with me was that I wasn't what he thought I was supposed to be. Black coaches are supposed to bring a lot of energy and be that guy

Michael felt as though he was stereotyped as a Black man to be a “rah-rah,” high energy guy. This is not his personality, and it obviously led to some conflict with his supervisor. Justin offered an interesting take on the stereotypes Black coaches face in comparison with how society operates. He opined:

I think this is part of human nature that people are different. There's stereotypes that everyone has. They're not always bad, they're not always good. That's just how people are. That's anything; whether it's a football coach or whether it's a guy working at Walmart or whether it's an Uber driver, whatever it is, I feel like that it's there all the time. I feel like when people pretend it's not there, I feel like that sometimes is a bigger problem than people who- I don't know- I guess, pretending like it's not there even if it's not an issue, is just as bad at times as saying that, "Yes, it's there and there's a huge problem." I don't feel like it's always a huge problem. Sometimes, it may not be a problem at all. It's just part of life. It's just part of the fabric of our society.

He continued to critique the color-blindness of others, when he stated, “I remember I heard people say, ‘I don't see color.’ Just like, ‘Are you blind? How do you not?’” One of Justin’s strongest opinions came from his belief that, “As a Black male, I don’t feel there's anything in my life where that's not a factor.” Justin would like for people to recognize that stereotypes and prejudices are real, rather than spending time stating that they do not harbor negative racial notions, and then take steps from that vantage point.
Bolo believes that his race may negatively impact the way that he is perceived, and sees altering that perception as one of his primary duties. He said:

Well, as a Black man it's my duty and my responsibility to project something positive other than some of the prototypical stereotypes that may be put out there in some form or fashion. To be able to show the educated side, to be able to show the parental side, to be able to show the mentorship, to be able to show the education of-- you want to portray something positive because your biggest goal is to remember that there are young men that are looking up to you or watching what you do. It's your duty and responsibility to give them hope and to show them, if you can do it, they can do it.

In alignment with earlier discussions of Black coaches as trailblazers for future generations, current Black coaches potentially feel a burden to combat the stereotypes associated with their race. Success in this fight would create a better future for upcoming Black coaches.

It is noteworthy that Black coaches may benefit from a stereotype boost. John commented that, “I think when head coaches get jobs they have very specific reasons for why they hire certain people…I think that a lot of us, especially Black coaches, get hired because of the recruiting aspect.” EJ echoed this sentiment when he said, “If they only got one Black [coach], I think it would be very tough to get players, African American players.” The belief that Black coaches are good recruiters may get them hired. Michael shared a humorous story that aligns with this discussion:

When I got the job here, the first thing that people asked me was, "We heard you are a really good recruiter." I go, "Where did you hear that from?" [Laughter] If you are a college football coach, you're probably going to recruit. That's part of the damn job. I just thought that was interesting no doubt. Almost like the justification of why I was hired. That is extremely accurate. It is. That's the perception. It's that the Black coaches, they're recruiters, and that's their primary role. They don't really get seen as strategists and thinkers.

The strong recruiter and poor strategist combination was also referenced by Jordan. He remembered being angry when a coach was categorized as “one great recruiter” because he
knows that, “You don’t hire a good coach in DI to be a recruiter. No, he has to be a great teacher.”

Michael also made a point about how holding a minority identity has sometimes served as the sole search criteria. He said, “In college guys get opportunities because the head coach will come in the room and say, ‘Hey, I want to get some Black GAs’, or ‘I want to get some Samoan GAs’, or ‘I want to get some whatever.’” Although that might be viewed as a positive for minority coaches, Michael discussed how hiring based solely on ‘race’ rather than ‘coaching ability’ has the potential to lead to problems, since you should value more in a candidate than his race. He stated:

What happens is these guys don't know a lot of guys. They end up hiring from a very small pool. A lot of times, you don't end up with the right guy. Then that guy does a bad job, or sometimes it's just that they just don't know, but if you hire guys and don't know what you're hiring, you're going to end up with a problem. It's not going to be a thorough vetting of it in my opinion because you've already put the primary attribute as Blackness. That is why guys err and I think that's just a problem because again, your most important position as you become a head coach is your coordinators. Nobody goes, "I want a Black coordinator. I want a White coordinator." It doesn't happen that way because what you're looking for is traits and characteristics that aren't limited to skin color.

To summarize, having a Black identity significantly impacts the lives of college football coaches. They may sometimes feel pressured to conform to a certain demeanor that is placed on them by other coaches, they may exist in a color-blind profession where not everyone admits racism is an issue, they may feel that they must combat stereotypes about their abilities to coach positions that are traditionally viewed as White, and they may be pegged as solid recruiters without mention of their analytical abilities.

**Stakeholders as a Factor**

The fifth subtheme on racial inequality focused on the important decision-making stakeholders that contribute to the perpetuation of racial inequality in the college football coaching profession. Participants discussed how administrators (both in athletic and university
administration), agents, boosters, head coaches, and the media all play a role in maintaining coaching as a White-dominated profession. Brian offered an interesting comment that helps to frame how racial segregation in America has most likely had a lasting impact of those in positions of power. He said:

There are a lot of older coaches in the business. There's a lot of older administrators in the business. I'm not saying that they still think along those lines, but I do know that if you were raised in a certain generation…Just like my mother tells me when she was a child. She says that, she remembers drinking from different water fountains than other people, than people that didn't look like her. I was thinking, "Wow." She says that even though times change, you'll never forget that. So how does it influence your life? Or how does it impact your life beyond?

His argument is that the life experiences of those in power – who tend to be older White men – include growing up during a time when racial segregation was normalized. Despite strides made in civil rights, those memories and that way of thinking may still impact the lives and thought processes of those individuals today.

One reason why views on Black coaches may not have improved is due to the way they are depicted in the media. Michael was passionate in his discussion of how the media hyps White coaches, but not their Black counterparts. This lack of equal coverage privileges White coaches while marginalizing Black coaches. He said that:

It's almost as if they (the media) don't take our experiences seriously. It's not the same if you're successful. I feel if you're a successful Black coordinator versus being a successful young White coordinator, maybe at the same level, you don't hear about the geniuses and the gurus. Those terms would never apply to coaches of color. The people who make these decisions are fans really at the end of the day. They don't really know, but their perception is their reality and so they hire those guys.

The media has an opportunity to serve as a social change agent, in that they can promote and buildup Black coaches in their publications. This process would then create a positive image of Black coaches with fan bases. Unfortunately, the terms ‘genius’ and ‘guru’ are most often associated with White coaches. Michael continued by noting, “If people think that Charlie Weis
Jr. is a guru, then they're going to write about Charlie Weis Jr. because that's the perception.”

Additionally, Michael supported his belief by highlighting the ascension of a group of White coaches that recently obtained high-profile jobs. He said:

We don't have that outlet because the media doesn't do it for us. The media does it for the token White coaches. I think they do that. You know who the young White coaches are coming up in the business because they promote them and they talk about them. Everybody knew Lincoln Riley would be a head coach when he was at East Carolina. That's just the way they do it. Mike Sanford Jr and all these guys, P.J. Fleck, those dudes were all-- Now they've got all these good jobs. We knew about those guys when they weren't at those places. That's just how it happened.

The media promoted those coaches, and their career progression occurred in alignment with the praises they had received. Administrators should consider how the media shapes their opinions of Black coaches, and guard against any biases.

Several participants referenced how the overly White administrator group, including athletic directors and board of trustees, hurts aspiring Black coaches. John said that, “The presidents of these universities, the athletic directors, they’re White. They can have a conversation with a White coach differently than they can have a conversation with a Black coach.” Eddie also believes that the lack of minorities in administrative positions creates an issue for Black coaches. He commented that:

At the end of the day, you're still dealing with college administration. On a much different level, if you look to the college administration, you don’t see no brothers there. You know what I mean? Most college presidents are White…most of those folks are not going to want a Black man leading their university. It just doesn't work like that.

Eddie’s comment that “those folks are not going to want a Black man leading their university,” combined with the fact that “those folks” are the gatekeepers to coaching jobs, suggests that Black coaches may be fighting an uphill battle. Ricky made a similar statement when he said, “It just seems that it's controlled by other people a little bit on who they allow to be coaches and stuff like that.” Rather than the resume affording Black coaches an opportunity, Ricky’s
comments suggest that Black individuals receive a position only once the powerbrokers view it as allowable. Jordan also contributed to this discussion by claiming that:

Sometimes, administration handcuffs a lot of places as to who they can hire and who they can't hire. That doubles the struggle of being Black in the business, because then, if the numbers are already low from Black coaches to White coaches, it's even more because now you've got to be signed off by a board of more times than not, older White men.

Eddie, John, Jordan, and Ricky all offered insights into how those in university administrative positions continue to negatively assist in the promotion of Black coaches, through advocating for and promoting the continuation of the status quo. This would then hinder Black coaches from obtaining a job at such a program.

An additional reason for why administrators may avoid hiring Black coaches is booster influences. TJ commented that a lot of “old money,” “old traditions,” and “old prestige” factor into the hiring process. He argued that boosters place expectations on administrations to keep the program similar to what they are used to. Eddie added that, “The booster clubs have so much power at certain levels of football because their donations go directly to football.” This involvement with the athletic administration gives boosters a certain amount of influence because administrators know that boosters can decide to cease giving if they become dissatisfied with the direction of the athletic department. Aaron discussed the role boosters played in Tyrone Willingham’s tenure at Notre Dame and Charlie Strong’s tenure at the University of Texas. He said:

If you look at Ty Willingham, that's what happened at Notre Dame. You look at Charlie Strong, same thing. The difference is the boosters coming in saying “I want you to get to this, out of here”. Just call it what it is. You start feeling pressure from boosters to get him out and then he's Black. He's African-American, which is even worse.

He later followed up by adding that “Texas high school coaches have thrown their support behind Tom Herman, but never did so for Charlie Strong.” That support was viewed as
significant and a big reason why Charlie struggled. Sadly, Aaron believes that Black coaches are stuck taking jobs at schools where they know the booster support is not there, and the program is not historically great (e.g. glass cliff). He stated, “We have to take bullshit jobs to just to get a head coaching job. We got to take a slap dick job where we know damn well, we don't have a chance to win it.”

Aside from administrators and boosters, agents continued to be referenced as key stakeholders that perpetuate racial inequality. James discussed how agents control the coaching search in college football. He said:

The next thing, is with the agents. You try to hire an agent to try to represent you because right now, everything is going through agents. If you don’t have a foot at the table, you can’t get in on jobs because all their buddies are getting them. If you don’t have an agent, before a job comes out, you can’t get on top of it, you can never get it. Right now, college coaching is going to the agent business to where-- That’s how jobs are being distributed right now.

Participants argued that agents are plugged into the job market, and control the movement of coaches to high profile vacancies. Aaron noted that if agents have a largely White clientele, then those are the individuals that will continue to get opportunities. Another advantage that comes from having an agent is benefiting from crossover representation. Brian discussed what this issue looks like when he said:

…the agents have so much control. You'd be shocked to find out how many head coaches are represented by guys that represent the athletic directors because there is no clause that says there's a conflict of interests. That doesn't exist. If Jimmy Sexton represents five athletic directors in college football and two are in the SEC, there's nothing wrong with that. He's just a lawyer who represents people who are trying to figure out a contract negotiation for a job that they've earned.

The fact that coaches and administrations share agents would subsequently advantage those individuals that have an agent who represents administrators. Several participants believe that
this advantage helps White coaches. Of note, James shared why most Black coaches do not have an agent. He said:

If you're at the Power 5 level, before you leave that agent already done got the next job already lined up for his guy. Agents are only handling really the Power 5 coaches. Well, if you're not a Power 5 guy there's not a lot of Power 5 coaches, so you can't get agents. It is kind of hard to get an agent when I'm not a Power 5 guy. Whereas if you're a Power 5 guy, there's not a lot of Black coaches in the Power 5. So there ain't a lot of agents that represent Black guys.

James would later comment that the reason why agents tend to handle mostly Power 5 coaches is financially-based. He claims that agents will take “4 percent” as their fee, which would make coaches at the Power 5 level prime candidates for representation. The coaches at that level tend to be White.

Finally, head coaches were mentioned as important individuals. Administrators hire the head coach, who then hires the rest of his staff. As Eddie commented, “…when a head coach comes in, they're not going through resumes. They already have their buddies. They have their friends and like you said, White coaches tend to hire White coaches. Black coaches tend to hire Black coaches.” His belief that White coaches hire their buddies was echoed by Chad. He expressed skepticism in the hiring process, saying:

I just don't have a lot of faith in the system that is blue collar coaching at this point. One thing that gets tossed around among me and some of my minority coaching colleagues is that "good old' boy network", trying to use to characterize being passed over for certain things, certain jobs that we know we should get. You just got to be a part of that "good old' boy network." More often than not, we're not.

The “good old boy network” was also referenced by TJ, who said “They (White coaches) keep each other in power. They’re going to look out for their friends and we are just not afforded a certain opportunity, because we are not in their in crowd.” Thus, one of the reasons why racial inequality may continue to be a problem is because head coaches, who hire their own staffs, are
not providing Black men opportunities, possibly because they are not part of the “good old boy network” or “in crowd.”

**Stacking**

The sixth, and final, subtheme on racial inequality focused on stacking, or the assigning of individuals to certain positions based on assumptions regarding one’s race. In other words, stacking covers how coaches might be funneled or pegged for certain coaching roles. This topic is frequently discussed in the research on the underrepresentation of Black coaches in college football, and was mentioned – unprompted – by several participants. Conversations covered why this is an issue and how participants have seen it occur in their profession. Although they did not call it “stacking,” they were describing this concept as one of the key factors that perpetuates racial inequality.

Aside from recognizing the existence of stacking in the coaching profession, Brian and Michael offered some thoughts on how stacking has the potential to harm Black coaches. Both men discussed how, if recent hiring trends continue, that there is a natural progression that coaches must go through if they want to obtain a coordinator or head coach position. Brian commented:

> If you look at the positions that Blacks coach, there’s a lot to be said about that because traditionally on the offensive side of the ball the quarterback coach is most readied to become the offensive coordinator which is a pipeline to head coaching. The offensive line would probably be the second position that would be in line to the coordinator and thus a head coach. Well, those positions are typically dominated, and I mean thoroughly dominated, by White coaches. Black coaches tend to coach running backs, tight ends and wide receivers.

Thus, for coaches that desire to become an offensive coordinator and/or a head coach in their future, it would be to their benefit to obtain a quarterback or offensive line position first. Michael recognized the need to follow this path as he started his coaching career back in the early 2000s,
and he noted that the same trends that exist today were also present back then two decades ago.

He highlighted all of this when saying:

I ultimately wanted to be a head coach and I looked at who were head coaches. A lot of the head coaches were quarterback coaches, offensive coordinators. Then I looked at the [coaching] staffs and it just seemed right…Black coaches were coaching running backs and coaching defensive backs for the most part. I didn't want to, I guess, get stuck. My initial goals-- I wanted to try to learn how to coach the quarterbacks. Those are the guys that seemed like they moved up. That was my thought was to try to get on the offensive side of the ball and be an offensive coordinator and try to be a head coach someday.

Unfortunately, Black coaches may have a difficult time obtaining a quarterback or offensive line position. AJ believes that since Black coaches have been stereotyped to be less intelligent than their White counterparts, and quarterback and offensive line are viewed as thinking positions, that obtaining one of those positions is difficult. He discussed the fact that Black coaches are removed from those roles when he said:

Because those two positions are a level of a higher thinking. Quarterback, obviously like I said, you have to have-- it's the most valuable position. O-lines, you got to be smart, you got to be tough. I think we've been stereotyped for not being able to think, not being able to make adjustments on the fly. D-line guys, you're attacking. You're athletic, you're attacking. You're trying to crack the quarterback. You got to tackle the running back. Offensive line, you got to adjust this. You got to make the smart movement on different blitzes. You got to count. We've just been labeled as minorities. That would be the main reason why. The level of thinking, we’ve gotten labeled for not being able to think, not being able to learn different schemes. That's the main difference between O-line and D-line.

The intelligence stereotype leads to stacking, or the placing of Black assistant coaches into non-central or peripheral positions. The central positions, or “thinking positions” as Jordan calls them, include “quarterback, offensive line, linebacker, and sometimes safety”, according to Jordan.

Chris observed that this peripheral placement is a common issue in the coaching profession. He said, “There's certain positions that you'll see a lot of us at…you haven't seen a lot of head coaches. I'm sure you won't see a lot of Black offensive coordinators. You won't see a lot
of Black offensive line coaches.” In addition to noting where you will not see Black coaches, he spotlighted where you are most likely to see them, saying, “You'll see receivers. You'll see running backs. You'll see D-lines, linebackers and even maybe DB a little bit as well, but you won't see too many offensive coordinators, offensive line and quarterback coaches.” On a somewhat humorous note, Brian mentioned that, “You always hear the old adage in football, and they say this mainly about Black offensive line coaches. The adage in football we call them unicorns because if you find one, it's like, ‘Oh my god, you see that?’” The notion that any Black coaches occupying the important feeder roles (e.g. “thinking position”) for the offensive coordinator position would be viewed as “unicorns” represents a concerning outlook for future hiring increases of Black coaches at the head coach and offensive coordinator positions in college football.

Considering the negative effects of the results from stacking coaching in peripheral positions, follow-up questions sought to determine why coaches are not striving to eliminate the practice. Brian and EJ offered two of the strongest suggestions. Brian focused on how some coaches might just be happy to have a job. They are unlikely to complain about what the job entails. He said:

To be honest a lot of them are happy to be there being since it is such a competitive field, it's such a difficult field to get into in the first place. I say that to say that you're not going to get that many that are going to try to shake the waters.

In addition to simply being happy to have a job, EJ suggested that stacking may not necessarily be viewed negatively. Arguing that coaches are typically placed into roles where they work with athletes of the same race, he claimed:

It makes sense. A lot of times, which is changing, but a lot of times your offensive linemen are going to be mostly White players and they tend to have a White coach. There's not many African American offensive line coaches in college or pro. Then the running backs, usually they'll be mostly Black and they have a Black guy with those
guys. The receiving position is kind of going 50-50, it used to be Black but I think it's more 50-50 right now. Then your quarterback is mostly going to be White…There are some Black quarterback coaches but it’s mostly White quarterback coaches who tend to also be the coordinator. If they got a coordinator, he’s probably going to coach the quarterbacks. On the defensive line, a lot of those guys are African Americans so they tend to go that way, but not exclusively.

To that end, his comments would seem to align with a functionalist perspective in that he justifies stacking as the result of desiring to pair athletes with a coach of the same race. As noted by EJ, Black athletes tend to occupy skill position roles, a point which was commonly discussed by participants.

Chase, Ricky, and TJ all mentioned that Black coaches typically work with skill position players, which tend to be Black athletes. These positions include running back, wide receiver, and defensive back, among others. In my conversation with Chase, he touched on how coaches and graduates assistants are frequently staffed or placed into certain roles, with race likely serving as an important factor. Ricky commented that, “A lot of it is just-- because that position is dominated predominately by African-American athletes and they want to hire a coach that can relate to them and be able to get those guys to perform.” This “position” he referenced was skill positions, and he also mentioned that if you want to get into coaching as a Black man you almost want to push in that direction. TJ offered a fairly scathing critique of stacking, while also mentioning that one of the skill position coaching jobs, running back, does little for career development. He said:

It’s almost like it was designed and built not for you to enter and when you do have coaches in certain positions they are on the-- what I like to call the outskirt positions, the wide receiver positions, the running back coach positions. I don’t know if anybody told you this but the running backs coach position in college football is a glorified GA position. That’s why you may see a lot of Black coaches in that position because that position is more of a maintaining position. It’s more of a position that you don’t have a lot of lead way. You’re just in this position to control these guys and then bring everything back to the forefront from an offensive standpoint.
In summary, the final subtheme of racial inequality, stacking, directly addressed how Black coaches might struggle to advance in their careers because they do not start off with the right entry-level positions. Black coaches obtain non-central coaching positions that do not afford them with an opportunity to display their knowledge.

**Theme 5: Racial Tasking**

The fifth theme that emerged from the data centered-around the potential existence of racial tasking in the coaching profession. Bopp and Sagas (2014) discussed racial tasking as a new form of stacking and positional segregation. Participants were told that one aim of this study was to investigate whether racial tasking occurs in the college football coaching profession. Racial tasking was defined as “one’s prejudice toward a minority coach’s capabilities, both mental and physical, to perform” (Turick & Bopp, 2016, p. 288). It was explained that racial tasking occurs when Whites and minorities are tasked to do different things despite occupying the same position. Bopp and Sagas’ (2014) study on how college quarterbacks may be tasked to execute their position differently based on their racial assumptions about their abilities was highlighted, as were the findings of the Turick and Bopp study that analyzed the underrepresentation of Black head coaches and offensive coordinators at the DI-FBS level.

Participants expressed strong support for the existence of racial tasking in the coaching profession. The two main subthemes that were discussed included the emphasis that is often placed on Black coaches to manage and monitor players, especially those that are Black, more than their White counterparts, and the tasks that Black coaches are asked to complete in their jobs.

**Player Management**

Several coaches noted, somewhat in alignment with the impacting Black youth subtheme, that Black assistant coaches are expected, or tasked, to spend more of their time interacting with,
and handling issues that involve, Black players. The majority of college football players are Black, so many White coaches expect their Black assistants to be present in players’ lives as role models and confidants. EJ discussed how that has been a key expectation of him during his tenure, and how it makes sense to him that such expectations exist. Essentially, he views racial tasking as a double-edged sword where the supervising coach may expect a Black assistant to interact with Black players, and the Black players have similar expectations. Thus, Black assistants may be involved in player management due to White coach and Black player expectations. He said:

Obviously the head coach, if he is a White head coach he would like you to help out with the Black players because, obviously, you’re closer to them, and it makes them feel more comfortable talking to you. But sometimes some White guy is just as good. Black players and White players. Players like to see people like them.

EJ believes that the Black player pool helps in getting Black coaches hired, since head coaches’ want prospective and current players to feel comfortable. Brandon also had a similar experience and said that, “It's like that here, but I also enjoy that part of the team.” He later said that, “I’m not saying that this is a bad thing…it is important for me to have them see me in a light that is positive.” Thus, this emphasis on Black coaches managing players was not necessarily viewed as negative, rather it might benefit aspiring Black coaches due to the fact that managing Black players served as the opening through switch many participants were able to enter into the coaching profession. Although that is accurate, there are some negatives attached to fulfilling that role.

One consideration that should be noted in this discussion is the background of the players involved. Brian commented that “Some people say they're best at managing some of the kids from the maybe the inner cities or the lower socioeconomic groups that tend to have whether it be behavioral or disciplinary issues.” The fact that some Black athletes come from troubled
backgrounds, means that head coaches’ need to make sure a support system is in place. To that end, it would make sense to hire Black coaches onto the staff and charge them with monitoring players. The issue, as Brian notes, is that those close relationships often leave an impression that “Black coaches are good recruiters” and they that they are “not given credit for their schematic prowess.” It is important to help players transition into, and subsequently navigate, college, but that should not be to the detriment of Black coaches’ feeling as if they are less involved in game planning.

James offered his critique of Black coaches having to manage players, highlighting that it can be an arduous and time consuming process. Essentially, noting that it takes away for time that could be spent on other tasks. He said:

A Black assistant is doing 85% of their work anytime they have to deal with a player. From a standpoint of going to class, any issues that a player has a Black coach is taking care of it. He takes care of it, whatever it is. If he’s not going to class, if he’s starting drama, whatever it is. That assistant coach is handling it. Whether it is his position group or the other side of football, it doesn’t matter. That assistant coach is making sure that he just takes care of all other issues that’s going on.

Advancing this sentiment in consideration of the current racial discrepancy – players are predominantly Black and coaches are predominantly White – Black assistants potentially are over-burdened with having to handle “85% of the work” that results from addressing all the issues encountered by Black athletes.

EJ commented on the fact that Black coaches tend to have a difficult time finding jobs, and his remarks suggest that coaches are type-cast into roles. He said, “Most head coaches they have a staff and they kind of lock guys in to their current position. I see this guy as the receiver coach. I see this guy as the running back coach but possibly could be coordinator.” As one of the most seasoned participants, his viewpoint of coaching staff construction is noteworthy. He acknowledges that the profession is difficult and that minorities are striving to break into a
profession where coaches already have guys they are familiar with, and they tend to lock guys into certain roles. Thus, minorities might be placed into certain positions and tasked with responsibilities that align with assumptions that the head coach makes regarding a minority coach. Opportunities for advancement may be limited based on how the coach initially perceived his assistants.

**Job Tasks**

The majority of coaches noted how they had different job responsibilities than their White counterparts. John was the lone exception, but he offered a reason as to why that is the case, saying “I've never encountered it because of the people I've coached under. I've just been fortunate enough that I've never coached under a White head coach.” In his mind, working for Black coaches has kept him from experiencing discrimination and racial segregation in the profession. Additionally, his use of the word “fortunate” was a powerful choice, as it reflects his fears of what it might be like to work under a White coach. For the other participants, the main points of discussion for the job tasks subtheme included an emphasis on variety of recruiting-based tasks and menial responsibilities.

In regards to recruiting, Aaron argued that when it comes to football “it ain't about X's and O's, it's about the Jimmy and the Joe's, but the Jimmy and Joe's are African-American Jimmy and Joe's.” Black coaches are tasked with recruiting because the “Jimmy and Joe’s” are also Black. Chase and Eddie took that comment further discussing the areas/locations that Black coaches are sometimes asked to recruit. Eddie said “I’ve always had the inner city schools”, and Chase said:

If you broke up our whole staff, you probably can guess who's in what area, who's in the Compton, LA, Inglewood area, you can see who's in the Northern California or the San Diego area, or the Ontario area. That's how you can try to see that in my experiences or across the country experiences.
All coaches are asked to recruit, but it seems that Black coaches are often asked to recruit the lower socioeconomic areas based solely on the color of their skin. They also tend to get involved in the recruitment of other players, assisting their coaching colleagues to help in obtaining a commitment. Though this is not necessarily a bad thing, as sometimes coaches can receive additional compensation or bonuses for exceptional recruiting efforts (Berkowitz, 2013), Black coaches that focus too much on recruiting may then become further removed from the game plan preparation process, and they would subsequently continue to reinforce the “Black coaches as recruiters” label.

TJ observed that Black coordinators sometimes function as figureheads for their units, whereas Whites are given more control. He said:

I've seen Black coaches be named the coordinator, but they don't call the plays. The reason why they have been named the coordinator is because the entire offense is Black and they want to have somebody that has a little bit more control or a little bit better connection with the room, but the head coach or somebody else is calling the plays. For instance, I've seen coordinators being named coordinator but the tight end guy is calling the plays or somebody else is calling the plays. I've definitely seen that before, I've seen defensive coordinators--be the defensive coordinator but at the same time the head coach is being involved in the play-calling when it comes to a minority coach. On the flip side, I've seen White coaches be the coordinator and they're the coordinator, the game is in their hands. It's in their hand like, "This is my deal. This is what I'm going to be."

The fact that, in the scenarios he observed, Black coordinators were not given an opportunity to execute a game plan that they put together hinders the ability of those individuals to use that coordinator experience to move up to the head coach position, should that be a career goal of those individuals. Considering the lack of minority coordinators across all levels of college football, with minority offensive coordinators occupying fewer positions that minority head coaches (Turick & Bopp, 2016) this observation is troubling and could help in explaining the lack of minority head coaches, as those Black coordinators are not being assigned responsibilities that lead to promotion.
On the opposite end of being a coordinator, Chad described the existence of racial tasking during his time as a graduate assistant. He worked at a program that employed other White GAs and made this comment:

Yes, I've definitely witnessed, to the degree of that being the case. Even as a GA, I was singled out as, pretty much. I was the Swiss army knife and, quite literally, did everything for the staff and for the head coach. Even more so, to the fact that I was always tasked with doing menial stuff, like taking the head coach's bags to his room, whereas I was, technically, the defensive GA at the time. During that time, they had an offensive GA, who wasn't tasked with any of that. Then, once we hired our old quarterback, who was White, as offensive GA, I saw him get treated a lot better than me and a lot less thrown on his workload versus mine, and I had been there for a year prior.

His time as a GA included being assigned menial tasks (e.g. taking the coaches bags to his room) and seeing a new White GA receive better treatment. Aaron also was asked to complete menial tasks at his job. He is tasked with recruiting a lot, but wants to do more. Aaron commented that “They may not give me the task of doing more strategic things to do, like for instance, I recruit--he (colleague) does PowerPoint or Excel sheets which I can do, but I may not get asked to do it.”

Providing Black coaches with opportunities to engage in strategic tasks is important for those individuals that would like to continue advancing in their careers,

Michael’s experience with racial tasking was quite interesting. He explained that he worked for someone that wanted him to be a high energy Black male coach. That is not Michael’s personality, so he struggled in that position. He said, “I’m not going to be one of those dudes that’s going to be a different person depending on what room I’m in. I wasn't raised like that. Maybe it has costs me some opportunities, but so be it.” The prejudice of his supervising coach in believing that his team needed an energetic Black coach, and subsequently trying to force someone to fit that mold, created unnecessary conflict.

Finally, the last opinions that were shared on racial tasking discussed it as a positive. Brandon and Ricky both saw value in Black coaches being tasked with recruiting. Brandon
stated that, “I know Black ones are actually maybe helping recruit some of the bigger name Black athletes. While that may be because of whatever notion, whatever understanding of the culture, what have you, not necessarily is that a bad thing.” Similarly, Ricky does not see Black coaches being tasked with focusing on recruiting as a bad thing. Instead, he views it as taking advantage of an individual’s strengths. He said:

A lot of our coaches, those guys that are a minority are maybe a lot more people friendly. They are great at recruiting and stuff like that. Some of the White coaches and staffers aren't as-- I would say, aren't as skilled at that. They don't have that personality even a little bit. A lot of Black coaches like I said, become key recruiters in terms of getting those recruits to help make that push for us. Whereas the other ones, they're a little less behind the scenes and do all the organizing for you to get everything in order for all of that.

Regardless of whether participants felt racial tasking was a positive or negative, our conversations supported the notion that coaches are asked to complete different tasks based on their race.

**Theme 6: Research Knowledge**

The sixth theme that emerged from the data center-around participants’ knowledge of the sport management and sociology of sport research and scholarship that exists on the underrepresentation of Black coaches in college football. It was somewhat expected that coaches would not know the research that is out there, as Irwin and Ryan (2013) have critiqued sport management scholarship of suffering from a practitioner-researcher divide. To that end, it was hoped that participants would comment on what has been published, offering their critiques and future suggestions.

As expected, the participants were mostly unaware of existing research on Black men coaching college football. The two main subthemes that were discussed included their opinions on the sport literature, which they was apparent to them, and how their interactions with colleagues helps to spread awareness of, and information regarding, racial inequality.
Opinions on the Sport Literature

When coaches were asked if they had ever heard or read the sport management literature that attempts to explain their potentially disparate experiences, most of them said “no.” As a follow-up, a list was read to them of previous findings, sampled from the literature review of this paper, which they were asked to comment on. The majority of responses could be summed up as “sounds about right” or “not surprising.” In terms of the lack of surprise, Jordan’s comment on how these issues have been around for a long time should be considered. He worked with a faculty member during his graduate studies that investigated race inequality in coaching, and he also worked on a thesis that addressed the same area. Jordan explained that he became aware of a lot of things while writing his paper. He said:

He (the faculty member) talked about the same things that we're discussing now. He got that published in 1997. Here we are 21 years later, and we're still talking about it. That shows that there hasn't been research amongst coaches. It's something as clear as it is, and it's under our nose. There has been growth. Don't get me wrong, there has been growth. I don't think that any coach has researched it. When I've talked about my thesis to different people, even when I was preparing with my chair, I might throw something out there to the coaches that were on the staff, and they had no idea. It's obvious information that there's an underrepresentation, and there's an obvious reason sometimes why that happens to be. As far as just doing personal research, I don't know of any coaches that do it.

His comment is multi-layered, and as such needs to be discussed in parts. First, he starts with an astute observation that some of the problems that existed two decades are still prevalent today. Problems that have existed for that long are likely known by the people working in the associated field, yet may persist because of the lack of coaches getting involved with the research. Second, as referenced, he highlights the lack of research amongst coaches. Scholars might need to consider partnering with – or empowering through the use of participatory action research methods – Black college football coaches. Jordan seems to believe that getting them involved in the research process might facilitate change. Third, the fact that coaches “had no idea” that the
research Jordan shared exists demonstrates the need for improvement in disseminating research findings, especially when the target population is a marginalized group.

Unlike the coaches Jordan interacted with, Justin answered “not extensively but I’ve seen some of it.” Conversely, Chase, Chris, EJ, and James all mentioned that they had never heard of or read any of the sport literature. Brandon, claimed to not have read the studies that were mentioned while also expressing that outcomes were “expected.” The key take-away from these discussions was how apparent the majority of the results were and why that is so.

Chase remarked that, “From being a minority, it's straightforward and you know about the lack of opportunity and situations, so nothing is staggering, or jaw-dropping, or any of that.” Eddie had the same viewpoint, saying “I know the broad-stroke answers because I work in the profession and I know what it is.” Existing in the field, and experiencing prejudice and discrimination, made some of these results apparent to these men. For example, AJ said brought up the “Good Old Boys system” when discussing homologous reproduction. He did not know the term, but knew the outcome. Same with John, who discussed the coaching staff dynamics that exist at staff meetings. He said:

   Right now, if you walked into our office and you came into a staff meeting, everybody on the right side of the table are mixed race, of different race. They’re either Black, Polynesian or something else. Everybody on the left side of the table, all White. We didn’t create a seating assignment, it just happened like that.

John observed that people gravitate to racially similar others every day, and views it as a natural way of life.

   One interaction that paints a nice picture of this issue occurred with Eddie. He asked how the research would be disseminated, and was told that efforts would be made to share the findings in academic journals and popular sport media sites. When I made mention of sport fans
not reading the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, he had a hearty laugh and said, “Yeah. I would say so.”

**Conversations with Colleagues**

During most interviews, participants shared stories of the conversations that they have had with colleagues about the lack of Black coaches in football. Through these conversations, participants grew in their understanding of the issues facing Black men in the coaching profession.

Chase and Justin both discussed how it is important to be cautious and sensitive towards other coaches when attempting to start these dialogues. Chase stated that as a coach “you have to play it perfectly. We’ve got to watch what we say, to not step on eggshells, or not put off what their stereotypical label is.” Aside from being cautious, understanding the sensitivity of one’s colleagues is also important. Justin, after being asked if he feels talking to his colleagues about the lack of Black coaches is too sensitive of a topic, described how it really depends on the person as to whether or not these conversations can take place. He said:

Sometimes, I feel like it can be. Sometimes, there's guys that you're comfortable with. Sometimes, you can have those conversations. Not only just comfortable enough to have it but you're comfortable enough that you feel like you can both be honest with each other. You can both be honest through the conversation. I feel like that's when the best conversations happen. But with that being said, there's a lot of times where everybody's not going to be completely comfortable in those conversations and that could be whether it’s trying to not hurt someone's feelings or put them in an awkward position or vice versa and not put yourself into that awkward situation.

According to Justin, when he says “that’s when the best conversations happen”, those dialogues are center-around deep issues like, “What more can we do in terms of creating opportunities for other Black men? What can we do in terms of preparing ourselves to be in a position to create those opportunities?” Answering those questions, and being able to have those conversations, is
something that all Black coaches should strive to create as they will learn a lot about the experiences and views of others.

Once strong support networks are established, Black coaches are able to have detailed topical conversations. For example, Michael said he has spoken with guys about the glass cliff, stating, “Guys talk about that too. Some say, hey, you want to be a head coach so bad than you take a job that historically, either has not been a good job or is not going to be a quick fix.”

Michael also mentioned that he and his friends discuss barriers to minorities seeking entry level jobs, saying:

We talk about it all the time. I think the player piece comes up a lot because what happens is, if you look around college football and in the NFL especially, all these young entry-level people are White. Then you'll get extra players that are of color to come back, but they don't get promoted. They don't get the same opportunities in my opinion.

These conversations can be about general issues, or they can be current with race as an undertone. Jordan shared a story of a conversation he had with a colleague about the Ole Miss vacancy during the 2017 season. He told me:

The one guy I was telling you about…he's a White guy. He's the same age as me. I talk to him a lot because, one, he sees it, so it's never one of those me trying to convince him of something that isn't there. He gets it, and he's one of those guys that may come and ask me like, "What's going on?" I just remember last year him asking questions like who would get the job at Ole Miss. If Matt Luke hadn't done well this year, and Hugh Freeze is out, who gets the job at Ole Miss? Well, he was like, "Well, I think Frank Wilson will get it", he’s at UTSA. He's been a great running back coach at LSU and now UTSA. I said, "Bro, let's be honest. You think that Ole Miss is hiring a Black head coach". He couldn't wrap his head around it.

The ability to have conversations with colleagues in which struggles are shared, provides Black coaches with information that scholars are attempting to obtain and explain. Black coaches that actively engage in conversations about race are then likely to be knowledgeable about the issues they are facing, and not dependent on research findings. Thus, creating partnerships with coaches so that researchers’ are part of those dialogues would be valuable.
Theme 7: Suggestions for Racial Equality

The seventh theme that emerged from the data involved discussion of suggestions for racial equality. Participants were provided with an opportunity to share what they believe should happen to improve diversity at the coaching position. The four main subthemes that were discussed included a critique of the Eddie Robinson Rule, reform suggestions that would create opportunities for Black men to coach, optimistic views on the future of Blacks in coaching, and their suggestions for future research.

Eddie Robinson Rule

The efforts made by The National Association for Coaching Equity and Development (NACED) to put forward a rule that requires institutions to interview at least one minority candidate for all head coach and leadership positions before making their final hires served as a popular topic of conversation. The Eddie Robinson Rule (ERR) is the college answer to the NFL’s Rooney Rule, which requires its member teams to interview minorities. The ERR received mixed reviews from participants, with some loving the rule and others fearing that it will not make a difference. Without dispute though, is the high regard that Eddie Robinson holds amongst the Black coaching community. AJ commented that, “Eddie Robinson, he's a legend. He paved the way for many of us by himself.” The NACED’s decision to name their rule after respected coach was positively received, even if not everyone believes that the spirit of the rule will be realized.

Participants voiced a few reasons as to why the ERR, as well as other affirmative action rules, are ineffective in college sports. One reason was based on the loopholes that exist in the NFL’s Rooney Rule, and the belief that those same issues m occur with the ERR. Jordan said:

I do like that, but I just want it to be thorough, if it ever came to be because now we're finding these loop holes that you see with the Rooney Rule. I would hate for that to seep into the Eddie Robinson Rule. I don't know if there's a way to prevent the loop holes.
The critique that the Rooney Rule is not thorough is typically reinforced through beliefs on pre-established networks and ‘sham’ or ‘token’ interviews. Chad used the Philadelphia Eagles 2016 coaching search as a case study example. He said:

I definitely feel that that is a step in the right direction, but at the same time I don't feel too strongly about it because that rule can just as easily be circumnavigated the same way that the NFL does it. Case in point, when the Eagles job was open a few years ago I believe, what was his name- Pederson was eventually hired, the one minority coach that they interviewed was Duce Staley, their running backs coach. Anybody in the coaching world knows that a running backs coach will never get a shot at a head coaching job right off the bat.

AJ also discussed a recent coaching search, as he critiqued the way the NFL’s Oakland Raiders complied with the Rooney Rule requirement, saying:

I'm for it if you're going to give guys an opportunity, but just to do it, just to do a rule, just to then I don't know. Because you've got the NFL deal where, for example, I think Jon Gruden, I think they brought in Tee Martin an OC from Southern California…you know they weren't going to hire him to coach the Oakland Raiders. I want to give Black people opportunities, but I just figured that if you're just doing it just to do it, when you've already got your guy in mind, don't even need to do it, man. Because it's a waste of time, waste of money.

The case studies provided by AJ and Chad show that some coaches are skeptical as to whether or not the minority candidates being interviewed actually had a realistic chance at the position, with their belief being the teams just needed to satisfy the rule. Another issue with these interviews that Brian identified, is the lack of preparation and potentially underwhelming qualifications of Black coaches interviewing for these jobs. Black coaches may lack interview experiences (preparation) and/or occupy non-central posts (qualifications), which would seem to severely hinder their ability to standout over a White candidate that does. This came across in his statement:

When it does come down to a job and there's a minority versus a White candidate, the White candidate's in a better position still because not only is he maybe in a quarterback position or started as a quarterback, and you came up the ranks as a running back or a
wide receiver coach, but additionally that individual may have had interview experience. We discredit the idea that the better interviewee gets the job or maybe that guy's had practice. He's had opportunities to really do the real thing not just a mock but real interviews.

This would suggest that there may be a lack of Black candidates with a realistic shot at getting head coaching jobs, which may mean that efforts should be undertaken to better prepare these individuals.

Additionally, some coaches believe that administrators are still going to hire the coaches they want. All this rule does is delay the hire. Chase articulated this viewpoint when he offered his thoughts, saying:

To me, that rule doesn’t mean anything just because ADs know who they are going to hire. It’s not like they don’t know. They’re just adding an extra component not only to delay, but an extra step where the AD always knows who he/she is going to hire. To me, it’s a rule that doesn’t make any change at all. If you would have said that there has to be X amount of diversity coaches, then, that’s completely different, but just the interview, that, it doesn’t mean much.

He believes that the AD already has a preferred option, and that it would be better to have a mandatory number of Black coaches set in place. Aaron also expressed little confidence that the ERR will make a difference. He said:

That shit don't mean nothing. Because case in point. I got an interview for a job, and it was just to say they interviewed a Black, but they had already made up their mind on who they wanted. It is just the process. Until you get some African-American ADs, it don't matter. Deals are done with the AD and president. Until the president looks like me, until the AD looks like me, it don't matter. You can make all the affirmative action rules, but what does affirmative action really mean?

Aaron’s view that the rules are irrelevant when the decision makers are all White needs to be addressed if the ERR is to actually bring about positive change in the coaching profession. Most athletic administrators keep a ‘short list’ of potential coaching candidates (Saunders, 2017), so the ERR requirement would potentially conflict with their preparedness.
Michael suggests that athletic director and others in athletic administration might not be the most important voices, rather the boosters are the individuals that actual hold the power and make decisions. He commented that, “I don't know if it’s the people doing the interviewing that you got to convince, it's the people who are influential. The money people. Those are the people making these decisions…I don't see much change coming from that.” Also of note, the rule only covers head coaches, so there would be no guarantee that Black assistants would be given opportunities to get jobs. Brian discussed how the ERR likely would not be extended to cover assistants, saying:

The other challenge is, let's say you’re Texas A&M. Once you pay Jimbo Fisher that kind of money it's difficult not to give him CEO-like control over hiring and everything. It's very difficult to say, "All right, we just gave you this but now I need you to interview a Black offensive coordinator." That's the challenge.

His assessment is that it is highly unlikely that schools would choose to pay a high profile coach millions, and then dictate how he fills out his staff. Since most coaches may have a staff they are comfortable with, and it being common practice for coaches to bring their previous staff with them, requiring them to interview minorities might be superfluous.

Building off the discussion of administrators hiring who they want, TJ said something that really adds to this conversation. He said:

Honestly, I’m just trying to give you a decent answer. At the end of the day I don’t think it matters because they’re going to hire who they want to hire anyway. Just because a rule is in place they say "Hey I have to interview so many or at least one minority candidate for this position." That don't mean that you're going to get the hire. I know a lot of coaches, I hear a lot of coaches go through and tell me that hey, well I was just a token interview, I knew I wasn’t getting the job. I think it could make some progress, I’m not going to completely down the rule, and I’m not going to completely say it wouldn’t help. It would definitely get more of us in front of the interview room so maybe potentially impress the coaches, impress the staff, but at the end of the day I think when it comes to college athletics you’re talking Power Five. It’s who’s in the know, it’s who is in your circle and it’s who knows who. I think it could help get more guys in front of the interview room so they could display their qualities, they could display their intangibles as a coach and things they bring to the table.
The interesting addition from his comment was “I hear from a lot of coaches…I was just a token interview.” Any affirmative action rule would need eliminate sham or token interviews. Unlike the complaints from AJ and Chad levied regarding the realistic chances of the interviews, token interviewees may be not receive serious considerations even though they are qualified for the job.

Eddie had two interviews this past year in which he believed that he was simply the token Black interviewee, and commented “Affirmative action has moved from wanting to give people of color an opportunity to this thing that colleges don't even really think about anymore.” Justin also discussed his hope that if the ERR was mandatory that schools would take it seriously. He stated:

I guess my hope would be that if the rule was adopted that people not only give interviews, but give serious consideration to guys when they get these interviews. It's not just part of a compliance deal where it's, “Well, we got to interview somebody so let's bring a guy in.” type of deal. I'd be all for it. I think any time you have something that’s going to push for a more of even playing field and create more opportunities, I think that's a great thing.

He wants “serious consideration” which is difficult to measure, though it is undoubtedly a necessary component of ensuring the ERR will be effective. John expressed a similar thought when he said:

As a person who could possibly be a candidate for that, it just damn near becomes a joke because it’s something that you're being forced to do. Is it really my qualifications or just a formality that you have to go through and be forced to do because I’m not White? Just to show that you have some type of diversity, you have to interview a minority coach. Come on. How do I feel as the minority coach that you’re not really taking me seriously, that you’re interviewing me because you have to? It’s just insulting because if you’re not going to take me seriously or even if you're getting made to interview me, I’m the one that, “No, don’t interview me. It’s okay.” I would rather not be interviewed. If I’m not a legit candidate, somebody you thought about or somebody you felt like would really get the job, I don’t want to be the guy that surprises you in the interview. I want you to have done your research on me just as well as you've done on the other candidates.
His voice came across as angry during that statement, and for good reason. For Black coaches that aspire to become head coaches, being interviewed for your dream post by an interviewer that is being “forced” to do so would be frustrating.

Where some coaches viewed token interviews negatively, several participants embraced them. As Brandon stated, “Though some may interview a Black as a token, or just to check the box, there will be some occasions where some people will be impressed by the coach that appears before them.” He believes that Black coaches just need a chance, and a forced interview is still an opportunity to shine and impress. Eddie also indicated that he would knowingly participate in an interview that he knew in advance was just to fulfill a minority requirement, calming:

If I get contacted about a head coach in position or any sort of job, and I know they already have somebody in mind I'm still going to go have the conversation. I'm still going to go and speak to those people, because you know what? It might turn out to be a good thing for me. If somebody hears me speak well then, they can recommend me to somebody else and everything just goes out good.

The opportunity to impress one administrative group might lead them to recommend Eddie to others. The logic is sound and it is a low-risk opportunity that at least gives him interview practice which is beneficial. Brian commented that interview experience is lacking in the Black coaching community, so these token interviews might help.

If you actually talk to some of the Black coaching candidates that are out there some of them will tell you that they've never interviewed for a head coaching position. If you look at Tony Dungy, Tony Dungy talks about interviewing once, twice, three times not getting the job. But I think that a person who interviews more often or more times is going to be a better than someone who's there for the first time. So I think even if it's just a token interview at times it still prepares that individual for interviewing and it helps them to get better at it.

In addition to those coaches that found positives in the token interview process, several mentioned that they had a positive overall view of the ERR. James said, “There should be a rule.
Because right now if there's ten coaches on staff, I guarantee you there's no more than three Black coaches on staff. Seven White coaches and three Blacks.” EJ, who worked in the NFL and saw the impact of the Rooney Rule in getting Black coaches hired, also shared his mostly positive views on the ERR. He stated:

I think it's a good idea because a lot of times in any profession, especially athletics, you tend to hire the people you know. I think the director 9/10 is going to be White. He knows mostly White guys and then he knows some Blacks also, but they tend to hire guys they know...So, I think that would be a good idea, at least they interview because sometimes you'll find someone you didn't know.

He had a positive view of the Rooney Rule and of the ERR, as he believed that Black head coaches have been hired in the NFL after surprising during their ‘token’ visit. Thus, college coaches at least getting a chance is exciting. Eddie shares that enthusiasm, saying “I'm not going to turn down the opportunity because I have a lot of confidence in myself. I feel like if I can get in front of you, I'm going to impress you.” Getting an opportunity to impress is already more than Black coaches have now.

Jordan discussed the lack of opportunities available to Black coaches when he said “…there are a lot of good Black or the coaches out here that just aren't getting the opportunity, especially from a position coach perspective.” The ERR would at least put some of those men on interview lists for vacancies. As Ricky noted “sometimes that's what takes to just to be able to sit down with them and show them your best stuff.”

The ERR might help to promote racial equality in that there are clear advantages that come from having the rule in place. However, the issues with loop holes and administrator stubbornness should be addressed.

Reform Suggestions

The second subtheme of racial equality involves reform suggestions. Participants were asked to answer the question, “Suppose a NCAA panel asked you what suggestions you might
have for improving diversity in the college football coaching ranks. What would you tell them?”

Answers, obviously, varied across interviewees with several strong ideas standing out. First,

Brian made it a point to say:

If I were brought before the NCAA, the first thing, and this is just being honest, I would first look at the people I am addressing. If they don't reflect diversity, then I would tell them that they have to bring a more diverse group to ask the question. Because if I'm looking at a panel of folks that are trying to create diversity in leadership positions in college athletics and the panel itself is not diverse than the question would be void.

Any efforts to improve diversity should include an examination of those spearheading the effort. If the group is not racially diverse, and instead is fairly homogenous, then serious questions might be asked of their true aims, and they will have potentially neglected important voices from the conversations they intend to have about racial biases, discrimination, prejudices, and reform efforts.

The first reform suggestion came from Eddie. He thinks that, “If there was a way that they could just find a way to get coaches more money” it would improve diversity. As Eddie previously noted, entry-level jobs are not always high paying, and some Black athletes that might desire to transition into coaching may come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, having additional funds to support their dreams might be one way to create positive social change.

The second reform suggestion was offered by Bolo. He wishes that more opportunities, similar to the Bill Walsh program, were available for Black coaches to work internships at premiere college programs. He said:

I think one of the big things is probably training, like how they have the Bill Walsh Minority Training internship. If there was some type of legislation or some type of rules that made that a requirement and you have to qualify for it, people would love to be able to be a part of something like that. I think that would go over pretty big and I think it's a win-win for both sides because it exposes the potential coaches to different backgrounds
and it also gives the administrators a chance to meet this person outside of just being a coach, just being a person and getting exposed to a different environment.

The opportunity for Black coaches to go to elite institutions as temporary interns would help them continue to develop their professional skills, while also building their network of contacts. As Bolo notes, administrators would finally have opportunities to interact with these minority coaches.

The third idea was suggested by Brandon. He would like to see the NCAA create a mentoring program that assists in helping Black coaches find mentors that want to help close the discrepancy gap. He said:

The NCAA has a lot of power to create or establish a formal mentoring program, where coaches—Like this is going to be a minority coaching mentoring program. I would probably argue that there are other coaches out there that—They probably see the numbers, and would like to do something about it, as well. I’m ignorant to any current mentoring programs that they do, but if I knew about them I would definitely join. To just find a mentor, somebody to help me out smooth out the wrinkles when I was there.

The purpose of this program would be to help in facilitating connections that could be leveraged in the job market. A review of the NCAA’s inclusion initiatives (Lapchick, 2018) reveals that of the variety of committees and training/professional development programs that are in place, a formal mentoring program is absent.

The fourth idea was suggested by John. Interestingly, his idea would see the creation of a formal list of Black coaches that seek to advance in the coaching profession. This list could then be used by administrators when looking to hire new coaches. He said:

First of all, I would probably identify all of my Black coaches in the NCAA. How many of them actually want to be promoted? How about we identify those coaches? Now you have a pool of legit candidates that really want to be considered and you really looking into them. To see if they have what it takes. Check them out.

Fear over teams interviewing unrealistic candidates would partially dissipate if such a list existed. The NCAA, or possibly the NACED, might be able to organize workshops and
networking events aimed at preparing those listed minority coaches. Formalizing the evaluation criteria for interviewees might still be an issue, but at least a legitimate interviewee pool would exist.

The fifth idea also relates to the interview process. TJ believe that Black coaches, and really all coaches, would greatly benefit from receiving thorough feedback after their interviews. They would then be able to incorporate the comments they receive into their professional portfolio. This would greatly increase their chances of securing employment in the future. TJ stated:

I think just a follow-up process that you can get feedback. I think that will be outstanding because now if I go have an interview at Alabama with Nick Saban and I don’t get the job, and I know that Nick Saban is not going to call me back, but if somebody said “Hey, we just felt like you are a great candidate due to your experience, but we wish you had a little more coordinator experience.” Well, now I know that maybe I need to go start working on trying to be an offensive coordinator and calling more plays, maybe I need to do that. I think it could help minorities out from a standpoint of getting better from a resume’s perspective and from a skillset perspective. It could if it was done right.

In our follow-up remarks, we discussed that the feedback did not have to be a 20-page dossier. Instead, a message with a few bullet points of things that the coach could work on would be sufficient.

The sixth idea referenced the need for athletic administrators to continue learning about, or to start engaging with, the scientific research that impacts their athletic department and programs. The reform suggestion came from Jordan, whose vision for administrators is the expectation that they participate in educational seminars that will discuss important research findings. He argued:

You don't want to hire a doctor that isn't continuing his or her knowledge. You don't want to hire a professor that isn't continuing his or her research on a specific thing. You see what I'm saying? If these people in these professions are supposed to be at their highest point of their careers and they're still trying to gain knowledge on certain things in their career, coaches should be the same way. Now, I'm not saying you'd have to go out here
and to be eligible to be a coach you shouldn't have to read 10 scholars journals a year and talk about— No, you don't have to do that, but I think there has to be some type of workshop a month administration from the highest levels that talks about these issues, that talks about the benefits, and the struggles as well. Because part of being ignorant to something isn't knowing that these things are out there.

The comparison of how doctors and professors are expected to stay current on the research in their field fits with athletic administrators. The scientific research that is produced by faculty in academia should be shared with the athletic administrators that might be able to serve as change agents.

The seventh reform suggestion focused on educating the media. Michael believes, and his belief is supported by the research (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010), that the media often depict White coaches as upcoming geniuses or gurus. He said:

Honestly, I think the biggest, biggest, biggest factor that would help the whole thing is if the media consciously recognized how they promote coaches. The words they use and how they describe them and the guys that they talk about, guys they don't talk about. Just have a real conversation about why that is.

Training seminars on word usage, and possibly conducting a content analysis of sports journalism articles, might be great ways to identify the areas that journalists need the most improvement.

Optimism for Future

The third subtheme of racial equality involved conservation that attempted to predict the future. Since these interviews occurred in 2018, participants were asked to gauge whether or not they believed that there would be an increase in the number of Black coaches in 2030, and to explain their answers.

AJ took a historical approach when answering this question. He said, “I think it is getting better. That's all what you want. You want it to improve. I don't think in the '50s or '60s, there were any Black offensive line coaches, [laughs] or even a Black coach, you know?” The small
increases that have occurred have given him hope that growth will continue. Also choosing a
time period, Chris made mention that there are now more Black coaches than when he played in
the early 2000s. He said, “It will be better. I don't know if it will be 50/50. It'll be better because
since the early 2000s, since I was in college, there’s been definitely an increase.” He also
correlated the number of Black coaches that will exist with the coaching trees of Black coaches
in the present, stating “The more of those (African American head coaches) that are hired, the
tree will grow from there.” If more Black head coaches are hired in advance of 2030, it is likely
that their protégés will be moving on to new jobs.

EJ is optimistic about the future. He believes that the importance of recruiting, changes in
graduate assistant representation, and the professional coaching conferences that he has attended
support this belief. In terms of recruiting, EJ thinks that its importance will lead to more Black
coaches getting hired. He said:

When I first started coaching, I was the only Black on the staff. My first three jobs
[laughs] I was the only Black on the staff. I think with recruiting being how it is, and that
parents are always checking for diversity. I think the head coaches especially at the
bigger schools they are going-- You got a staff of 10, they're going to try to have four.
Three or four African-Americans that’s three or four minorities at least.

Since recruiting is such an important part of success in college football, combined with Black
parents wanting to see diversity, gives EJ confidence that Black men will continue to find
coaching jobs. Additionally, also in relation to coaching staffs, the increase in the number of
graduate assistants means more Black men are provided a chance to coach. He observed:

At one point you can only have two graduate students, one offense, and one defense. A
lot of times we were, maybe 10% Black. Now you can have four. Now you may have
head coaches that make it 50%. Some 25%, but some more 50%.

Having more Black graduate assistants, which is an important entry-level post, means more full-
time Black coaches could be in place in 2030.
Lastly, EJ has a lot of confidence because of his transition from the NFL back to college. After returning from the pros, he attended a conference and made the following observation. He said:

I went to the NFL for 10 years. Afterwards, I went to my first college convention in 10 years, and had really never seen so many young Black coaches, it was unbelievable. Right now a lot of players that are playing want to coach and they get into coaching. From when I came up, it's different from night and day. There's a lot more Black coaches than what there were. They're working their way up and all the stuff, it's more White coaches than Black but it's a lot more Black coaches than I've ever imagined.

The increases that he has seen over his time in the profession give EJ an encouraging prospective that younger faculty might not share.

Ultimately, the future is a big unknown. TJ noted how this question has likely been asked for a long time. He said, “I guarantee somebody asked the same question 12 years ago, I guarantee that same question was asked 15 years ago.” To that end, his comments truly reflect an accurate depiction of how this conversation should be viewed. He stated:

I think it's tough. That's why I said earlier that I wouldn't be surprised if we're still having this conversation 12 years from now, because it's so institutionalized, it’s so hidden. The racism and the discrimination for minorities is so hidden and is so institutionalized to where it's almost deep and so embedded that once you pull one root out, it was so tough pulling that one root out that damn you've got 100 more to go. You get exhausted and it's frustrating and while you pull that root out, now you're going to the next root and you pull that root out but the root you just pulled grew right back. It's like wow, that's why you need more people to buy in because if I can get 150 people to go out there and pull the roots out versus that one person pulling the roots out maybe we can have a little bit more progression.

Racism is a permanent and pervasive part of American society, so any conversations about racial equality being achieved – or improved upon – by 2030 would need to consider that. As he indicates, efforts to improve one area occur with several more areas still in disarray. That might be why Aaron thinks “it'll be worse” and Ricky said “I think, I don't see too much change happening to be honest.” It will take more than one sole entity’s efforts to improve diversity.
Future Research Ideas

The fourth, and last, subtheme of racial equality involved asking participants to share ideas for research. After our conversations, an opportunity was provided for them to suggest research studies that they would like to see someone undertake. Some coaches had the beginnings of an idea, whereas others had strong ideas. These ideas include conducting research on those academics that choose to examine this issue, cultural training, graduate assistant hiring criteria, general hiring criteria, promotional analysis of long-tenured coaches, and determining how many opportunities for promotion Black coaches receive.

The idea for conducting research on scholar motivations for examining this issue was suggested by Jordan. He said:

I would probably ask, really, "Why?" I guess it's a personal question but, "Why does this intrigue you guys?" Away from the broad answer of maybe you want to raise awareness or you want to evaluate what-- I guess, what do you guys think would be a possible solution to putting the lack and underrepresentation of Black coaches to the forefront?

As a Black man working in the coaching profession, he wants to know why the lack of Black coaches is of interest to some scholars. Although the reasons for conducting research vary from scholar-to-scholar, it makes sense that an insider would want to know why a group of outsiders cares about this issue, especially if those scholars are White. Thus, this concerns should be addressed for researchers that seek to work with this population.

Bolo suggested that research be conducted on cultural training. In our conversations, he was passionate when discussing the need for individuals to really attempt to get to know different people. With all of the focus that continues to be placed on White administrators and coaches for not hiring enough minorities, surprisingly little conversation has focused on to what extent White individuals understand Black people. Bolo said:

Making sure people understand each other's culture…I think it's important that depending on the diversity of your team that each person or each ethnic group of each race have
enough information to understand their fellow teammate? Who is this guy? Who is this person that I'm sharing a locker room with every day? What is he like? Why does he wear the clothes he does? Why does he like that music? It can be a person of Polynesian descent. What's their culture? What's their background? I think that's the biggest thing about creating the brotherhood and I think that should be-- That's something that people should educate themselves on because those are the people you're trying to recruit and be a part of your program.

His comment focused on locker room dynamics, but our follow-up conversation discussed coaching as well. A study on the education that administrators and coaches receive to work with individuals that come from diverse backgrounds is needed. If these coaches receive no such training, then that might be a reason for why they do not hire minorities.

Brandon asked for research on how graduate assistants are evaluated and hired. If Black mentors knew what criteria is generally preferred then they would be able to better assist their mentees. Brandon articulated:

What are the criteria for a coach who is looking for a graduate assistant? It's not always the best players that are chosen. If you try to map it out, say that your guy was looking to be a graduate assistant, here is what coaches are looking for. Here are the things you need to do to prepare yourself for being a graduate assistant. Out of that pool is where most of those guys are chosen.

Understanding what criteria is looked upon favorably would help aspiring young coaches. As Brandon notes, the best former players are not always chosen, so there has to be some important factors that coaches have identified.

On a similar track, John would like to read the results of interviews with coaches explaining why they hired the coaches that they did. He said:

Why did you hire this particular coach? Because he is a great coach? Because he is a great recruiter? Kind of compare and contrast. How many of those guys are considered-- instead of statistically, get the information from the horse’s mouth.

Just as knowing the criteria for graduate hires was important, learning of the criteria that has been used in the past to hire full-time assistants is equally valuable. John is essentially
wondering, if all qualifications are equal in a search, how a coach ends up getting hired over another.

EJ stated that he would like to see research on those coaches that have been in the profession for a while and the extent to which they promote minorities. He wanted to look at those coaches with at least a decade of experience. He said:

When a head coach has been a head coach for a long time. Has he ever had a minority coordinator? Some head coaches have never had a minority coordinator because they always hire who they feel is qualified. Now some guys would never do it even if the guy was qualified.

After identifying who these coaches are, efforts could be made to interview them and discuss this finding.

Finally, Chase would like to see research on the number of Black coaches that have had promotion opportunities. It is important to remember that not every promotion is desirable, as the geographic location, level of competition, and salary might supersede an opportunity for a better title. Chase remarked:

I would want to know the number of opportunities they have to advance outside of what they want to do, their goals. How many times have they actually had an opportunity to get an interview or a promotion in their job? I would like to do a study of somebody that's been in the profession 15 years. How many opportunities has he had to be a coordinator? That's something, 10 years or more.

Obtaining these numbers would add significant knowledge to the research on discrimination in coaching, though providing scholars with a clearer picture of the opportunities available for Black coaches. It is already known that Black coaches do not occupy a lot of coordinator and head coach positions, but it is unknown how often they interview for those posts.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The participants in this study offered insightful critiques of a game and profession that shaped, and continues to shape, their personal and professional lives. The purpose of this study was to investigate Black college football coaches’ experiences of working in a White dominated intercollegiate sport space. It was apparent during our talks that these coaches believe there are barriers Black men must overcome in the college football coaching profession. They were aware of these issues, and understood that they must learn to navigate around and through them in order to find success in their profession. Additionally, discussing these barriers served as a passionate talking point for many, as the opportunity to voice their frustrations and share their views on the profession seemingly served as a stress-relieving process. Participants seemed to enjoy our dialogues and expressed great interest in wanting to read the results of this research inquiry; a point which many of them re-iterated in their follow-up email responses during the member checks phase.

The use of Glaser’s (1965) constant comparative method resulted in the development of seven themes that were identified in the data. These themes, when considered with the existing body of literature, offer several interesting points from which discussion can occur. First, although the underrepresentation of Black men coaching in college football has received a lot of attention, those studies are most often quantitative and do not integrate Black voices into the conversation. Second, efforts made by scholars and The National Association for Coaching Equity and Development (NACED) to facilitate positive social change through the promotion of affirmative action requirements, might need to be re-evaluated based on the criticisms of said requirements. Third, the existence of racial tasking in the coaching profession must be addressed, as the assigning of tasks based on race might negatively impact career advancement and
development opportunities for minority coaches. Fourth, participants’ apathy and criticisms of
the research that has been conducted should be understood by scholars conducting research on
this marginalized group. Fifth, efforts should be made to address and research the issues these
men have identified as important areas of future inquiry.

The Black Coaching Experience: How they see it?

The first research question (RQ1) was “What are the experiences of Black men in the
college football coaching profession?” Participants viewed coaching in both a positive and
negative light. They discussed how the profession affords them with an opportunity to invest in
the lives of young Black athletes, while at the same time keeping them connected to the game of
football. Conversely, they also discussed how the profession can be discriminatory and racist;
treating Black coaches as if they are an inferior out-group. This group of coaches were often
stereotyped as intellectually inferior to their White counterparts and face a variety of obstacles
towards career advancement. Their acknowledgement of these obstacles address the aims of the
second research question (RQ2) which was, “What racial inequalities, if any, do Black coaches
believe exist within college football sport?” They believe that several inequalities exist, such as
White privilege, homologous reproduction, the glass cliff, stereotyping, stacking, racial tasking,
and flawed affirmative action policies. These inequalities will be discussed in the sections to
follow.

Participants’ viewed the coaching profession as an opportunity to have a positive impact
on so many, while simultaneously acknowledging the struggles that come with being a Black
man in the role. When discussing why they coach, participants’ focused on their ability to give
back to the game and the opportunity to impact the lives of young Black athletes. Discussion
centered-around the troubled backgrounds of many Black youth, with coaches seeing the
opportunity to serve as role models to them being an enjoyable, and important, part of their job.
Thomas (2001) noted how mentors of minorities should be aware of the challenges facing their mentees, and that “many cross-race mentoring relationships suffer from ‘protective hesitation’: both parties refrain from raising touchy issues” (p. 105). The Black coaches in this study were all former players, which positioned them as strong candidates to serve as mentors to Black players, assuming they had experienced some of the same challenges that their Black athletes had/would encounter. Thus, many of them saw the coaching profession as being about the players, which was best exemplified when Bolo said “your purpose is to educate and affect young men’s lives in a positive way.”

Additionally, recognizing the need “to do their part” is a salient aspect of how participants’ view the profession. Eitzen (2015) mentioned that minority, or Non-White, groups typically encounter discrimination and face negative stereotypes. The media’s depiction of Black coaches as intellectually inferior to their White counterparts (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010), and the view that leadership positions are typically reserved for Whites (Manning, 2013), represent stereotypes Black coaches are attempting to combat. Efforts to change these stereotypes have not been successful (Finch et al., 2010), but that has not deterred the spirit of many of my interviewees. For example, Brian believes he needs to “do his part” to contradict assumptions about the work ethic and ability of Black coaches. Additionally, the trailblazer subtheme really focused on the idea that Black coaches are working towards breaking down barriers for future generations, not necessarily their own career opportunities.

Gaining access to the coaching profession can be difficult for Black coaches as they must struggle against the “Old Boys Club”, an institutionalized process whereby power and hiring is concentrated within a particular in-group. The “Old Boys Club” facilitates a hiring process in alignment with homologous reproduction (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005), or the hiring of
individuals with similar surface level characteristics. Bopp and Sagas (2012) reported the race of most assistants on a head coach’s staff in football reflected his own, and Nkomo (1992) found job applicants with a similar race as their evaluator tend to receive more favorable ratings.

Another way in which White coaches may receive favoritism is through familial and generational connections. One contribution of this study is introducing the importance of lineage into the conversation on race inequality in coaching. As John remarked, White individuals may have familial connections to the coaching profession that provide them with immediate access and benefits that Black are denied; since the profession was historically White. For example, participants referenced the children of Bill Parcells, Bill Walsh, and Charlie Weis, with Chad also mentioning that he was passed over for a graduate assistant position at an institution that hired the son of a coach on staff. Considering the recent attention that has been paid to how Randy Edsall and Bill Snyder have been chastised for nepotism (Altimari, 2018; Mellinger, 2017), this issue deserves future research attention and examination.

Considering the fact that 86.9 percent of head coaches in college football are White (Lapchick et al., 2018), few Black men are likely to be hired into the profession. Those who are hired, according the participants in this study, viewed themselves as trailblazers. Participants were cognizant of the existence of racial discrepancies in coaching at the collegiate level, and believe their success is key to breaking down the barriers that have historically prevented Black coaches from getting coaching jobs. In doing so, they hope their successes will help Black coaches break into the profession more easily.

In addition to having a desire to improve the future for aspiring Black coaches, Aaron and others discussed how the notion of racial uplift is a big part of the coaching experience. Cunningham et al.’s (2001) finding that Black coaches encounter hiring discrimination combined
with the fact of those who do get jobs have greater intentions to leave the profession (Cunningham & Sagas, 2004b), suggests having a support system of Black coaches that will work to help an aspiring Black coach break into the profession is vitally important. Eddie’s comment on how football is “not a profession where you can come in and not have people backing you”, would seem to advocate for Black coaches to help other Black coaches. This help, according to Jordan, can manifest itself through utilizing one’s network of coaches to find jobs for aspiring Black coaches, helping Black coaches learn how to navigate through the profession, and helping to develop their coaching competencies. Eddie referred to it as “karmic energy” in which you put back in what you get out, and Bolo said “if you’re in a position to excel in this business then help bring people up with you.” Although several Black coaches do try to help one another, Aaron observed how “African American coaches don’t look out for other African-American coaches.” This might be due to, as Jordan alluded to, the pressures that come from coaching. He noted “it’s hard to advance guys” when you are under pressure to win. The fact that Black coaches have shorter tenures at their jobs (Turick & Bopp, 2016), harms Black coaches looking to advance in their careers. A Black head coach has a shorter clock, three years versus four, which may impede his ability to “advance” assistants. This point deserves further investigation in future research, as the shorter tenures for Black coaches devalue the social capital that Black coaches accumulate; since their same-race networks are not able to exist for long periods of time.

Another part of coaching experience for Black men is becoming accepting of, or almost complacent about, the discrimination they encounter. Rather than racism dissipating through interracial contact (Carrington, 2013), Black men continue to experience discrimination and prejudice. Aaron recognized that Whites have it better than Blacks because “We live in
America”, and Eddie noted “if you want to be a professional in the world, racism is just part of it.” He also said “Hey, it's something I got to deal with, I'm going to deal with it, and move on.” Those viewpoints, as well as the subthemes associated with the perceived impact of race in coaching, depict the coaching profession as unfair to Black coaches. This inequity is known and understood by Black coaches, and though it is not acceptable, these men have become complacent of things being the way they are. A consequence of this acceptance may result in fewer Black coaches engaging in activism, as they might view the issues in the profession as being “fixed”. In addition to acceptance, complacency may become part of the coaching experience for some. Brian’s comment on how some Black coaches that have made it might view the chance to advocate for racial equality as “maybe not their cause” and they are not “going to shake the waters”, combined with Chase’s notion of “watching what we say”, suggests some Black coaches know their jobs might be threatened if they speak out. For those men that have obtained coaching positions, many of which offer a lucrative salary, they might struggle to share their voice. As Justin mentioned, some of their coaching colleagues might feel awkward discussing issues of racial inequality. In a competitive profession, some might believe staying silent and just working hard is the way to see change realized in the future, rather than risk being fired/not retained.

Thus, participants’ views on being Black coaches included feeling as if they need to succeed in order to change the racial stereotypes placed on them, attempt to “pull up” other Black men into the coaching profession (i.e. racial uplift), to combat the “Old Boys Network” which continues to privilege Whiteness, accept racism as part of the coaching profession, take on bad coaching jobs just to get a chance to work in the profession, and understand how finances and socio-economic status are barriers to breaking in/being able to speak out. These views
aligned with existing literature, in that participants were of aware of these obstacles and were working hard to overcome them, they acknowledged the “Old Boys Network”, and their views on acceptance and complacency reflect White hegemonic rule. In agreement with Sachdev and Bourhis (1991), participants’ acceptance of racism being a part of the coaching profession ensures Black coaches will not become vocal opponents of the status quo, which would be threatening to White administrators and coaches.

To combat the status quo, discussions of how racial uplift and financial considerations contribute to the racial discrepancy in coaching must take place. Future research should investigate how racial uplift occurs, and how Black coaches might be empowered and trained to bring along Black mentees. Additionally, determining ways in which the profession is financially realistic for Black men that come from lower socio-economic backgrounds is important. Since the player pool is typically comprised of Black youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds, they may find it difficult to survive on graduate stipends. The racial discrepancy should not exist just because Whites can afford to hold entry-level coaching positions. Furthermore, an empirical analysis of the glass cliff’s existence in college football, with a focus on race, should be conducted in the future.

Regarding salaries, financial considerations also impact the playing and coaching experience, as Hartmann (2000) remarked when he discussed sport as a way to escape ghettos. Eitzen (2015) also commented that sport can sometimes facilitate social mobility, a fact not lost on the participants in this study who often described the players they worked with as coming from troubled, low socio-economic backgrounds. If Everhart and Chelladurai’s (1998) belief that the athletes of a sport are likely its future coaches, then the players who might want to become coaches are going to come from poorer backgrounds. For some of these men, a football
scholarship was the way they were able to afford college. Accepting a graduate assistantship, or a student or volunteer coach position, might potentially require outside support from family. Stated another way, consider the barriers a 22-year old Black male encounters when trying to break into coaching; he has to fight through the “Old Boys Club”, an oversaturated job market, and identify a job opening in a profession that traditionally does not hire through job boards. His reward at the end might be a $10K stipend, which is below the federal poverty line. If he is unable to subsidize his income through outside sources, which could be difficult depending on the number of hours he is expected to work, then coaching is not a realistic career. This finding, and subsequent discussion, represent one of this study’s most important contributions to the literature. The monetary barriers that aspiring Black coaches must clear is a yet unexamined issue in the sport management literature. Research is needed that attempts to determine to what extent aspiring Black coaches are choosing not to pursue the profession based on the financial earnings attached to entry level positions. If initial salary is serving as a barrier, then Eddie’s suggestion, that work needs to be done to determine how to provide those individuals with more money, should be explored in greater detail. Finally, in regards to money, one’s dependency on their salary may dictate their actions. For example, one participant owned a separate business in addition to his coaching. He indicated he has the ability to leave if he ever feels disrespected or unappreciated, which is not an option the majority of his Black colleagues have available to themselves.

Based on conversations with this study’s participants, being able to leave a bad job is not a luxury the majority of Black coaches are afforded. Ryan and Haslam (2005) described the glass cliff as a phenomenon that occurs when individuals are forced to accept bad jobs, which would subsequently set them up for failure. Black coaches’ believe they are often asked to accept jobs
at historically underperforming and under-resourced programs. Aaron colorfully described it as “We have to take bullshit jobs to just to get a head coaching job. We got to take a slap dick job where we know damn well, we don't have a chance to win it.” Several other coaches remarked that the glass cliff phenomenon continues to provide Black men with only DI-FBS jobs in which they are not well-positioned to succeed. Steve, in his comments advocating for Black men to be given opportunities to coach, stated “when you give me an opportunity, don’t give me the worst job in the fucking country.” Of the topics that were discussed, this one seemed to have elicited the most profane language, which speaks to both an awareness of and anger towards this continued process of Black coaches being set up for failure when they forced to accept positions at historically bad program. Research on the existence of the glass cliff at the head coach position in college football would seem to be a worthwhile undertaking, based on participant comments.

**The Existence of Racial Tasking: What it means?**

The third research question (RQ3) sought to determine if “Black college football coaches believe they are tasked to complete different assignments than their White coaching counterparts based on race?” As discussed in the racial tasking theme, there was overwhelming support for the existence of racial tasking in the coaching profession. The subthemes discussed how they were often tasked to deal with player issues, as well complete different tasks in their jobs. Just as racial tasking served as a new form of stacking and positional segregation for the quarterback position, it has had a similar impact on Black college football coaches. Rather than assigning them to unimportant peripheral roles, Black coaches are asked to be heavily involved in player management and recruiting. Although both of these tasks are vitally important to the sustained success of a football program, the value of being a good recruiter does not always lend itself to being a desired trait that gets someone promoted to a coordinator or head coach position. Instead,
being tasked to manage players and recruit might consume too much of a Black assistant coach’s time, such that he does not accumulate knowledge and experience. This reflects a difference in human capital (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005) that may privilege White coaches over their Black counterparts.

White coaches see a benefit (e.g. interest convergence) in hiring Black coaches to handle players. Considering the statements made about these kids coming from “troubled” backgrounds and the comments made about the daily grind of the coaching profession, Black coaches have a great deal of player interaction. For White coaches, hiring Black coaches gives them an individual who can mentor and supervise those players, potentially leaving them with peace of mind that their athletes are doing what they are supposed to do. Unfortunately, the Black player pool greatly outnumbers the Black coaching pool. This discrepancy may overburden Black coaches to deal with player issues to the detriment of their own career advancement and development. However, some coaches did discuss racial tasking as a positive, essentially viewing it as taking advantage of an individual’s strength (e.g. Black players viewing Black coaches as potential mentors and/or role models). Just as Black quarterbacks might claim racial tasking is a positive, as they now have opportunities to play the position, they may be unaware of the impact racial tasking has on their player development. Similarly, just as Black coaches might view racial tasking as a positive, as it gives Black men opportunities to coach, the tasks they are assigned to complete continues to perpetuate the “Whites as intelligent, Blacks as good recruiters” (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010) narrative that privileges White coaches. Several coaches commented on how all coaches at the DI-FBS level have to recruit, so Black coaches are not gaining a skillset their White counterparts lack.
The finding that racial tasking exists in the coaching profession serves as another important contribution that this study makes to the sport management literature, as it has human capital implications for Black coaches that must continue to receive further examination. Understanding that racial inequality manifests itself in new ways over time, as Edwards (2016) noted with his “No Final Victories” comment, racial tasking serves as an explanation for why the increase in minority hires has not led to an increase in minority coordinators or head coaches. Black coaches are being tasked with roles that do not provide them with the skills and traits typically ascribed to future head coaches. They are completing the same tasks as White coaches, just being asked to focus more of their time on them. Racial tasking appears to strengthen the stereotype that Black coaches are solid recruiters, which hinders their upward mobility in the profession.

In alignment with learning necessary skills, Michael’s comment about the NFL’s promotional structure, which the college system mirrors, shows how the tasks assigned to Black coaches impacts their career trajectories. He observed how a White coach might go from a quality control position, to quarterback coach, to offensive coordinator, and then to the head coach role. The college game has similarities in that graduate assistants and quality control coaches start off at the entry-level posts, transition into position coach roles, coordinators, and then become head coaches. Depending on the roles Black and White coaches start off at in this field, in which they are typically stacked into certain positions, (Sack et al., 2005; Day 2015), they may be tasked differently from the start of their careers. Because of the duties they are assigned, they learn different components of a position that better align them with desired skills. Stated another way, and in alignment with what TJ observed, a White coach and a Black coach might both be graduate assistants, but depending on the position group with whom they work,
and the subsequent duties they are assigned, they might develop differently. Both men occupy the same position, graduate assistant, but one might be learning the skills from working with the player positions that best prepare them for career advancement.

Regarding TJ’s observation, he noted how some Black coordinators do not call plays, while their White counterparts do. In his example, both men have the same title, but the skills they are developing are vastly different. The Black coach is just a figurehead, whereas the White coach actually executes the duties of the position. Several participants commented that the “thinking position” coaches are typically White, and if the graduate assistants or quality control coaches for those positions are White, then a continuous cycle of White men in power will persist. To that end, affirmative action efforts should focus on the increasing diversity in the “thinking position” coaching roles (e.g. linebacker, offensive line, quarterback, etc.). This is important because I believe, based on my conversations, that a diverse pool of applicants must exist before change will be realized.

EJ’s confidence that Black men will continue to find coaching jobs is based on the fact that recruiting is one of the most important aspects of building and sustaining a program, in addition to Black parents wanting to see diversity on a coaching staff, the mobility of those assistants should be monitored closely. Where his confidence might initially be an example of interest convergence, and subsequently contributing to the current problem, it could be an answer down the road if these same racially tasked coaches advance to head or coordinator coaching positions. The NCAA’s new recruiting calendar allows prospective student-athletes to take official visits in the summer before their senior year, with an early signing period also added in mid-December. These changes in the recruiting calendar have the potential to lead to increases in
minority hires if recruiting ability becomes the main factor in future hiring and promotion practices.

In summary, the concept of racial tasking received support from participants with conversations primarily focusing on the subthemes discussed in the results. The value that White coaches receive from hiring Black coaches to manage their Black players and assist in recruiting (e.g. interest convergence) does provide Black coaches with opportunities to break into the profession. However, the tasks they are asked to do, though important to the success of their programs, are typically not viewed as the preferred hiring criteria. Future research on racial tasking should, for the purpose of comparisons, attempt to determine what job tasks are predominately fulfilled by Black coaches, and what job tasks are predominately fulfilled by White coaches. Those responsibilities could then be compared to the hiring criteria for head coaches in an effort to identify which responsibilities Black coaches need to acquire if they want to be competitive head coaching candidates in their future. Additionally, the results would provide evidence that could be disseminated to head coaches and administrators proving this phenomenon exists, and subsequently encourage them to consider the professional development ramifications.

**The Impact of the Literature: What needs to change?**

The fourth research question (RQ4) sought to examine “the opinion of Black college football coaches on the sport management literature that attempts to explain their potentially disparate experiences?” The research knowledge theme, and its subsequent subthemes, suggests our, the academic community’s, approach to conducting research on Black coaches in college football might need to change. My participants and I discussed the existence of the glass ceiling (Cunningham, 2003), homologous reproduction (Cunningham & Sagas, 2005; Day & McDonald, 2010), human capital (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005; Wright et al., 2011), institutional theory
perspective (Cunningham, Sagas, & Ashley, 2001), role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rosette et al., 2008), social capital (Day 2012; Day 2018), and stacking (Sack et al, 2005). Coaches were unaware of the majority of the research that had been conducted, but generally found the results to be about what they expected.

Although the conversations I had with my participants were interesting, the apparentness of previous research findings came across as a possible area of improvement for scholars. Jordan’s multi-layered comment serves as a great discussion point for this issue. He had a faculty advisor during his masters program while writing a thesis. His advisor researched the underrepresentation of Black coaches back in the 1990s, and Jordan unfortunately observed the very same issues exist 20+ years later. This observation aligns with Edwards (2010) statement that racial and ethnic prejudicial issues have long ‘plagued’ the institution of sport, as well as Agyemang and DeLorme’s (2010) comment on how college athletics have historically devalued Black coaches’ capacity to guide a team. The permanence of racism in society (Nkomo, 1992) and the fact that there are no final victories in the fight against racism (Edwards, 2016), are reasons for the continued existence of the same problems over a two decade span. TJ’s “root” analogy is also important here, as he essentially acknowledged it can be an arduous process to fix one problem and then move on to the 100+ remaining. Still, it is important not to become discouraged when examining this issues. The Edwards (2016) comment was not about discouragement, rather complacency, as he was afraid some scholars would view issues of racial inequality as resolved whenever progress occurred, rather than consider how new issues may have emerged.

Jordan’s second point focused on the need to get coaches involved in research. Singer (2005) argued that marginalized groups are creators and holders of knowledge. He critiqued how
researchers’ view these groups solely as holders of knowledge that is then extrapolated through survey research. Instead, efforts should be made to work with these groups to create knowledge. Yiannakis (1989) and Chalip (2015) have both advocated for an applied sociological approach to conducting research in which partnerships like those Singer described exist. Black football coaches should be encouraged to suggest what issues need to be addressed by future researchers if positive social change is to be realized. They should be part of the development phase of a research project, the results of research surrounding their experiences should be shared with them, and they should be provided with opportunities to comment on the sport management and sport sociology literature attempting to explain the discrepancy in coaching hires. This realization represents another important contribution of this study. At present, the way in which race inequality on this population has been conducted needs improvement. The apparentness of the research almost makes it come across as self-serving, which should be avoided if possible. Examinations of Black coaches in college football are not alone in failing to foster these partnerships, as Irwin and Ryan (2013) reported sport management literature suffers from an academic-practitioner divide. Coaches do not, according to the participants in this study, read the research, and researchers typically do not work with the coaches. Bridging this group through either collaboration or empowering coaches to conduct their own research should be a future aim of scholars in this area.

Jordan’s third point described how he shared the research he came across while writing his thesis with his fellow coaches. The coaches he spoke with were unaware this research was being conducted. It is a problem if we are conducting research to address questions to which our population might already know the answers through their experiences. It might be even more problematic that they never come across and/or know our studies existed. Thus, it is important to
consider how our research findings are being disseminated to both the scientific community and our populations of interest. If our populations do not read scientific journals, then we need to determine what they do read and attempt to share our findings in those outlets as well. Particularly when investigating marginalized groups, efforts should be made to share what is learned with these individuals as the research aims are often to improve equality and/or equity for this group.

Another takeaway is that the scholarly community needs to become part of the dialogues Black coaches are having regarding racial inequality. Justin noted how these conversations usually discuss “What more can we do in terms of creating opportunities for other Black men?”, and “What can we do in terms of preparing ourselves to be in a position to create those opportunities?” Michael recalled having conversations about Black coaches taking bad jobs (e.g. glass cliff) and how all the young entry-level people in coaching are White (e.g. access discrimination and stacking). Researchers and advocacy groups need to be a part of those conversations, as Black coaches engaged in conversations about race are likely to be knowledgeable about the issues they are facing, and thus can contribute and not simply be recipients of our research findings.

The Efficacy of Affirmative Action: What can be done?

The fifth, and final, research question (RQ5) sought to examine if “Black college football coaches have ideas for reforming the collegiate coaching profession that would promote racial equality?” Participants’ shared many fears they have towards current affirmative action rules, and these must be addressed. The fear that athletic departments might identify and explore loopholes which would help them avoid meeting the spirit of these diversity requirements is concerning. The Eddie Robinson Rule (ERR), which is college football’s answer to the NFL’s Rooney Rule, suffers many of the same issues as its predecessor. Unlike the Rooney Rule, the
ERR is not a mandated rule college athletic department must follow. Collins (2007) remarked how the Rooney Rule directs franchises to use “good faith,” when interviewing minority candidates, but there is no proper way for evaluating such compliance. He believes the idea of programs operating in “good faith” when attempting to satisfy a rule that was enacted to counter discrimination in the workplace seems highly unlikely. Support for this belief can be seen, and was discussed by coaches in this study, in terms of how NFL teams are able to schedule sham interviews without repercussion as no discipline system is currently in place to deter such behavior.

Participants’ observations that NFL teams have circumvented the rule by conducting sham interviews heavily influenced their opinion of current reform efforts. This opinion was also likely influenced by the fact most collegiate athletic departments already fail to acknowledge the impact of racial inequalities (Bimper & Harrison, 2015), as their mission statements tended to use a color-blind lens. Two possible solutions to this issue addressed in the literature are ensuring search committees are diverse (Singer, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2010) and creating an oversight group charged with evaluating the way institutions go about the hiring process similar to the former Black Coaches and Administrators (BCA) organization (Harrison & Yee, 2009). Creating diverse search committees may help to ensure that minority candidates receive an honest evaluation and that universities are operating in ‘good faith’. The BCA organization used to serve as a ‘watchdog’-type group for monitoring hiring practices in college football, and a lot of Black coaches received opportunities during their tenure (Lapchick et al., 2012). Former BCA Executive Director, Floyd Keith, maintains the organization’s Hiring Report Cards “had a significant and lasting influence on this historic breakthrough” (Lapchick et al., 2012, p. 6). Although TIDES produces race and gender report cards now, those reports focus mostly on
providing demographic data. To that end, in addition to attempting to close loopholes that institutions may utilize to conduct sham interviews to satisfy the ERR, it would be beneficial to form an organization that is charged with evaluating the process administrators undertake to hire a new coach.

Getting rid of phony interviews, and replacing those interviewees with serious contenders, is the next step in helping to facilitate positive social change. Participants’ offered several ways in which this can be accomplished. First, efforts should be made to educate sport journalists on the ways in which they promote and write about White assistant coaches. If they were to discuss up-and-coming Black assistants with the same enthusiasm as they do White coaches then more realistic candidates might be afforded opportunities to interview for jobs. The need to educate the media is a significant issue that the study has highlighted and deserves future research attention. The power the media has to hype and promote upcoming young coaches has, according to the research (Cunningham & Bopp, 2010) and the participants in this study, helped perpetuate the status quo. Educating and working with journalists should be a future aim of scholars hoping to see racial equality realized in the college football coaching profession.

The fact that administrators are aware of who the media hypes (Smith, 2012), lend support to the believing the media has an important role to play. Since most athletic directors keep a “short list” of potential coaching candidates (Saunders, 2017), promoting up-and-coming Black assistants may help those individuals receive early attention for administrators. Additionally, John’s suggestion to create a list that includes the names of coaches’ seeking promotions might assist in alleviating some of the fears about the candidates being interviewed. Administrators could use this list as a resource to identify which prospective minority candidates are on the market. Furthermore, the men on this list could then be targeted by advocacy groups
as individuals in need of career development seminars and/or workshops. Of importance, the content of these programs should be beneficial and not, as Michael recalled, teaching them useless knowledge such as proper dining etiquette.

Programming is important because, as Brian identified, equal preparation does not exist for Black and White coaches. Just providing a Black coach a chance to interview does him no good if he is going up against someone that has coached a preferred position and/or has prior interview experience. Since Black coaches are traditionally stacked in peripheral positions and tasked to handle players more so than be involved in game planning/strategy, combined with any interview preparation or prior interview experiences White coaches may have accumulated, White coaches are privileged in interview settings. Thus, there is a strong need for identifying ways in which Black coaches that are provided with serious opportunities to interview for jobs are equally as qualified as their competition. Of course, as noted by several participants, actual interview experience will always trump any developed programming options. Thus, it is important to afford minorities with more than just mock interview opportunities. Several participants’ shared how they viewed interview experiences as an occasion to hone their interview skills so, if nothing else, they might be better prepared for future interviews. The hope is that they continue to receive interview opportunities and are not passed over after having only a few chances. As some participants’ mentioned, the fear of being passed over is important as the Black men that receive multiple interview opportunities might be viewed negatively if none of those interviews resulted in a hiring.

Finally, the last area where work must be done is with the important decision makers (e.g. boosters, athletic directors, university administrators, etc.). As many participants’ commented, an affirmative action rule, and subsequent mandated interview requirement, is a waste of everyone’s
time if the candidate that is going to get the job has already been identified. Chase said, “To me, that rule doesn’t mean anything just because ADs know who they are going to hire. It’s not like they don’t know”, Aaron said, “I got an interview for a job, and it was just to say they interviewed a Black, but they had already made their mind on who they want. It is just the process”, and TJ said, “At the end of the day I don’t think it matters because they’re going to hire who they want to hire anyway.” A hiring process that has a known conclusion at the start, counteracts all the good intentions of these affirmative action rules. Saunders’ (2017) findings that 1) written policies for hiring college football coaches do not exist, 2) the majority of athletic directors keep a “short list” of potential coaching candidates, 3) over one-half of all searches includes input from outside stakeholders (e.g. boosters), and 4) human resource departments have little involvement in a search, align perfectly with participants’ views of athletic directors being the primary decision makers. Educating and training administrators and other important stakeholders on the racial issues that exist in their sport, thus helping to increase awareness of their own unconscious or implicit biases (Karpinski & Hilton, 2001) and/or aversive racist (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) leanings, might help improve the efficacy of affirmative action efforts.

In summary, there are several things the academic community can do to help create or champion positive social change in college coaching. The establishment of oversight groups tasked with ensuring affirmative action requirements are satisfied in good faith and evaluating the hiring processes that universities undertake to fill a vacancy, working with the media to promote up-and-coming Black coaches, creating career preparation opportunities that position Black coaches to successfully compete in the interview process, and educating decision makers on existing racial issues in coaching and the purpose of affirmative action rules, all would
address the fears discussed by participants’ rationalizing why they are pessimistic about such rules creating change.

The Real Research Needs: What they want to know?

The final section involves a discussion of the potential research projects participants’ shared. Based on each coaches’ experiences, several ideas for future research were shared such as conducting research on academics that choose to examine racial inequality in college coaching, the need for cultural sensitivity training, revealing what important hiring criteria are used by administrators/head coaches, a promotional analysis of long-tenured coaches, and determining how many opportunities for promotion Black coaches receive. The future research ideas subtheme introduced these ideas, and the following sections will discuss the importance of, value of, and ways to conduct the research these coaches suggested future researchers investigate. Additionally, it should be noted that these studies should be conducted with Black coaches, so forming partnerships in advance is vital.

Jordan’s belief that researchers should do a better job explaining their motivations behind conducting race-related research deserves discussion. Considering my status as a White male, it is completely reasonable for any marginalized group to be somewhat skeptical of my intentions when wanting to work with them. Although I attempted to create a comfort level with my interviewees by including in each conversation a brief description of who I am, my interests in this topic, and an explanation of what I hope to accomplish through this research, some participants may have still had reservations or withheld information during our talks. Some coaches may view researchers as outsiders, so it is important to consider and understand one’s positionality (Sanchez, 2010) while also continuing to engage in reflexive processes (Reinhart & Reuland, 1993) throughout the interview process.
The lack of explaining one’s positionality and engaging in reflexive practices might contribute to why the academic-practitioner divide (Irwin & Ryan, 2013) exists, as coaches are unlikely to work with researchers that have not explained why they are passionate about investigating an area of inquiry. Particularly, when those researchers do not look like or share similar characteristics as the population they are working alongside. Additionally, the applicability of the findings also may impact coaches’ desires to read our research. Coaches want to hear us explain our intrigue before they are willing to open up and share, especially when we are asking them to critique their own profession. Thus, it would be valuable to interview scholars who work with marginalized groups and ask them to describe how they engage in understanding their own positionality and practice reflexivity. The anticipated findings of such a study might offer best practices suggestions to scholars.

Bolo’s cultural understanding idea also deserves discussion. Despite the well-intentioned efforts of affirmative action rules and policies, one glaring weakness is the fact that administrators and coaches do not receive cultural sensitivity training. Expecting White administrators and coaches to hire Black men without, as Bolo said, “making sure people understand each other’s culture” seems unrealistic.” The process of hiring individuals with similar surface-level qualities (e.g. homologous reproduction) may occur due to comfort and familiarity. One way to break down the barriers and stereotypes Black coaches constantly combat is to implement educational training sessions that would help diminish the chances of non-Whites would be viewed as different/”Others” (Eitzen, 2015). These sessions should include opportunities for diverse interactions, as Wilder’s (1986) contact hypothesis theory would suggest contact between individuals from different groups will reduce prejudice between the diverse groups. Additionally, it would help to eliminate the college sport caste system.
(Agyemang & DeLorme, 2010) that has developed. Perhaps, White administrators and coaches could be required to complete implicit association tests (Greenwald et al. 1998) to measure the unconscious racial attitudes they might be unaware of, with the hope that productive conversations would then occur around how to best work through these biases. If White administrators and coaches were to complete an IAT it would show commitment to putting some “skin in the game” (Bimper & Harrison, 2015), through making an effort to learn about their implicit biases.

On the topic of athletic administrators receiving cultural sensitivity training, they should also be required to learn about, or start engaging with, the scientific research that impacts their departments and programs. As Jordan noted, our society expects certain professions (e.g. doctors, lawyers, and teachers) to continue reading about advancements in their fields, or acquire continuing education. Essentially, we have placed a premium on those professions to embrace the literature being produced and disseminated in their fields. Athletic administrators should be required to do the same, in the sense that the literature produced highlights important issues. This might require the formation of focus groups with, or the distribution of a survey to, those individuals in an effort to determine what would be the best way to share this information with them. This is important because the goal of researchers investigating racial inequality in college sports should be to share our findings with marginalized groups and those in positions of power who can enact change.

Finally, there was a lot of support for investigations of what hiring criteria exist when making employment decisions. At present, coaches do not receive feedback after they are passed over; most indicated they received an email or quick phone call informing them that the search committee decided to hire a different candidate. Although this outcome is not too different from
most professions, where reasons for hiring selections are not shared, it makes complete sense for Black coaches to feel pessimistic about whether they will have more opportunities in the future when they do not know why they are currently being passed over. Whether it be at the entry level-positions of graduate assistant or quality control coach, or up through the head coach, Black coaches have a desire to learn what criteria are used in making hiring decisions. These desires were not based on wanting something to complain about, rather they want feedback so they can improve upon their preparation going forward. In regards to entry-level positions, they wanted to know what criteria administrators and coaches use when selecting those individuals so they can advise their mentees accordingly. In regards to the full-time coaching positions, they would like to know what areas of their resume were weak, so they can work with their supervisor to acquire or improve upon the areas that were identified.

As noted previously, this feedback does not have to be a 20-page dossier. Instead, a message with a few bullet points of things the coach could work on would be sufficient. One area of potential synergy amongst the participants’ suggestions would be to involve the oversight group in this process. In addition to evaluating whether a university acted in ‘good faith’ when interviewing a minority candidate, this organization could also spearhead the efforts to provide Black interviewees with feedback. Of note, the coaches in this study believe this rule should be enacted because it would help all coaches, not just Black coaches. They see immense value in providing individuals with feedback they can use to modify their approach to future interviews. This idea would also help universities prove they did not conduct a sham interview, and they did act in ‘good faith’, since they would be able to point to the feedback they provided and the oversight group’s evaluation of how they handled the process.
The Black coaches I spoke with want to see racial equality realized in the coaching profession. They work hard and have a strong desire to excel in whatever role they are assigned. However, they do recognize the scientific community can help. First, they need to understand our motivations for wanting to help them. Second, they would like to see someone spearhead the creation of important research projects. These projects include cultural understanding training, determining how to best disseminate the findings of the research on racial inequality to athletic administrators and stakeholders, and create a system through which all coaches receive feedback after interviews.

**Summary**

The discussion addressed the emergent discussion topics that the themes prompted. The subsequent sections focused on how these Black men see the college football coaching profession, the impact of racial tasking on the career advancement and occupational skill development opportunities for Black coaches, changes needed to be made by scholars to improve the quality of, and access to, our research findings, what can be done to create more opportunity for Black men to get into coaching, and the questions they would like to see answered in the future.

Participants’ expressed mixed views on the profession, as racial discrimination hinders their ability to attain their career goals. The outcomes of racial tasking were described as a potentially great way to enter into the profession, and for future growth in the profession due to the importance of recruiting, but was also met with more player management than game planning and strategy session expectations. Researchers were encouraged to partner with more coaches to identify research gaps, collect data, and analyze and critique the findings. These partnership might also involve empowering these men to engage in action research, where they have agency to conduct research to solve problems they identify. The creation of oversight groups and
educational seminars were mentioned as positive examples of reforms that could be enacted to help Black coaches get jobs. Finally, participants’ research suggestions were introduced with detail pertaining to how they might be undertaken.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

The sample for the qualitative phase of this study was delimited to include Black men who currently have/that had coached in college football only, and the population was determined by the availability of email address on university athletic department websites. Participants chose to participate in this study after receiving the initial contact email (see Appendix D). Within the sample, participants were quite diverse in terms of years of experience, positions coached, and levels coached at. The sample included a strong representation of coaches at the DI-FBS, with three coaches coming from outside of that level. Those three currently coach at the FCS, NAIA, and high school levels. All three were referrals from interviewees, and they all had prior Division I coaching experiences.

The diversity of opinions that were gathered helped to better depict the overall Black coaching experience, rather than focusing on just those in the Power 5, Group of 5, geographic region, etc. Although these men were able to offer a unique prospective on the coaching profession, none currently hold the title of coordinator or head coach at the DI-FBS level. Thus, their unique take on the profession comes from the vantage point of individuals who are still working towards the coordinator or head coach role, though several had been coordinators in the past. Conducting interviews with Black coaches that are currently offensive/defensive coordinators or head coaches may have led to different insights, so those individuals should be conducted should be interviewed in the future.

The lack of Black head coaches and offensive coordinators, combined with the fear that critical responses likely impacted the decision to participate in this study or not. More so than in
any of my previous qualitative studies, participants asked a number of questions about how their information would be kept confidential. Additionally, even though efforts were made to contact coaches after national signing day, having 45-60 minutes of free time to speak with me potentially served as a deterrent for some.

Despite my best efforts to share my intentions and motivations in conducting this study, my status as a White man, that did not play college football, and having never coached college football, might have influenced the responses the coaches’ provided. However, our conversations were often fairly comical and I was able to use my previous experience working in college football at the Division II level to connect with the coaches. When the transcripts were sent out for member checks, the majority of coaches indicated they enjoyed speaking with me, hoped I would continue investigating this area, and would like to see the finished product. To that end, I am confident the data they provided included their honest and sincere thoughts on the profession.
APPENDIX A
BLACK HEAD COACHES IN COLLEGE FOOTBALL

*Black Head Coaches in College Football*

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<th>Season</th>
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<tr>
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*Statistics provided by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport: College Sport Race and Gender Report Cards*
APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM DOCUMENT

Informed Consent Document

Protocol Title:
An Exploration of the Coaching Experiences of African American College Football Coaches
(IRB ID: 201800152)

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:
The purpose of this study is to investigate Black college football coaches’ experiences of working in a White dominated profession and space.

What I will be asked to do in the study:
You will be asked to meet with the researcher to take part in a semi-structured interview regarding your experiences in collegiate athletics. In particular, how your experiences as a Black coach working in college football will be the focus of conversation. Interview questions can be emailed to you prior to the interview if you request. After the interview, the interviewer will transcribe the conversation and email it to you for approval. At that time any potential follow-up questions will be posed. Your participation in this study will be completed once you approve the transcripts and answer any follow-up questions.

Time required:
45-60 minutes

Risks and Benefits:
You will be exposed to no greater of a risk than you might typically face in your daily life. We do not anticipate that you will benefit directly by participating in this experiment. However, the findings of this study may provide insight and information on the experiences of Black coaches that can be used to improve diversity and inclusion in college football coaching.

Compensation:
You will not receive any compensation.

Confidentiality:
Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your name will not be used in any report as your information will be assigned a pseudonym that you choose at the beginning of the interview. Any information that could identify the participant or others to their comments will be removed during transcription. When the study is completed the recordings will be destroyed, but the transcripts will be maintained for 3 years. Only the research team will have access to the transcripts.

Voluntary participation:
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.
Right to withdraw from the study:
You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Who to contact if you have questions about the study:
Robert Turick, M.Ed.  Trevor Bopp, Ph.D.
Ph.D. Candidate in Sport Management  Assistant Professor of Sport Management
University of Florida  University of Florida
turick44@ufl.edu  tbopp@ufl.edu
(352) 294-1636  (352) 294-1663

Who to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:
University of Florida Institutional Review Board, IRB 02 Office, Box 112250, Gainesville, Florida, 32611-2250; Telephone: (352) 392-0433; E-mail Address: IRB2@ufl.edu.

Agreement:
I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: ________________________________  Date: __________________

Principal Investigator: ______________________  Date: __________________
APPENDIX C
QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee pseudonym:

Location: Start Time: End Time:

Date: Notes:

INTRODUCTION:

At the beginning of the study the interviewer will start off conversation by discussing the participant’s day and thanking him for agreeing to be interviewed. Next, the interviewer will inform the participant that the study is being recorded for transcription purposes only. At this point, the researcher will also allow for the participant to choose their pseudonym name if they would like (TURN ON RECORDER). The interviewer will then ask the participant if they have read through the consent form document and if they have any questions regarding study. Once all questions have been answered, the participant will be asked to either sign the document (if the interview is being conducted face-to-face) or verbally consent to participating in the study (for phone and Skype interviews).

QUESTIONS:

The following questions will guide the interview:

1) How long have you been a coach at the collegiate?
   a. Maybe discuss reasons for coaching this career.
   b. Past occupations that led to this point.

2) Who have been some of your coaching mentors?
   a. Helped you get into the profession
   b. Continued influencers

3) Can you describe your typical day?
   a. Maybe discuss difference between in-season and out-of-season
   b. Changes across jobs

4) How does your identity as a Black man intersect with your role as a college coach?

5) Are you familiar with the Eddie Robinson Rule proposal?
   a. If yes, what are your thoughts?
   b. If no, describe it to the participant.
6) What are your career goals? How has your supervisor assist you in meeting those goals?
   a. Do you receive support from the athletic department?
   b. Overall, do you feel supported?

7) Are you familiar with any of the research literature that has been published attempting to explain the lack of minority coaches in college football?
   a. If yes, what are your thoughts?
   b. If no, discuss with the participant.

8) In regards to the lack of minority coaches in college football, what questions should sport scholars be asking? What areas deserves further investigation?

9) I would like to describe a new concept that my advisor and I have been developing called “Racial Tasking”. Please discuss if you believe it has any applicability to your profession.

10) Do you have ideas for reforming the coaching profession that would promote racial equality? If so, please discuss.

CONCLUSION:

Inform the participant that they have addressed all the questions that you had planned for the interview. Ask if they have any comments about the study, suggestions for questions that they thought could have been asked/should have asked, or if they would further like to clarify previous comments. Once any comments, suggestions, and clarifying comments have been made thank you for their input and participation in the study. (TURN OFF RECORDER)
Good afternoon,

My name is Robert Turick and I am a Ph.D. Candidate in Sport Management at the University of Florida working towards completing my dissertation. My research focuses on the underrepresentation of Black coaches in college football. I am planning to interview current Black coaches on their experiences in the coaching profession. The objective of my study is to learn more about the everyday experiences of these men and discuss the research that has been conducted to explain their underrepresentation in college football.

Your experiences are very important to me in meeting my objectives. To that end, I would appreciate it if you would consider setting aside some time to speak with me. These interviews have around 10 guiding questions and should take anywhere between 45-60 minutes depending how much you want to share.

Please email me if you would be open to being interviewed for this study and we can set up an interview date and time. Also, please review the attached consent form document and let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration to be part of this study.

Sincerely,
Robert Turick

Robert M. Turick | Ph.D. Candidate
Dept. of Tourism, Recreation & Sport Management
University of Florida | Yon Hall 6
PO Box 118208 | Gainesville, FL 32611
Ph. (814) 853-2732 | turick44@ufl.edu
You have received IRB approval to conduct the above-listed research project. Approval of this project was granted on 1/25/2018 by IRB-02. This study is approved as exempt because it poses minimal risk and is approved under the following exempt category/categories:

2. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures, or the observation of public behavior, so long as confidentiality is maintained. If both of the following are true, exempt status cannot be granted: (a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the subject can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subject, and (b) Subject’s responses, if known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject’s financial standing or employability or reputation.

Special notes to Investigator (if applicable):

In the myIRB system, Exempt approved studies will not have an approval stamp on the consents, flyers, emails, etc. However, the documents reviewed are the ones that should be used. So, under ATTACHMENTS you should find the document that has been reviewed and approved. If you need to modify the document(s) in any manner, then you’d need to submit to our office for review and approval prior to implementation.
**Principal Investigator Responsibilities:**

The PI is responsible for the conduct of the study. Important responsibilities described at the above link include:

- Using currently approved consent form to enroll subjects (if applicable)
- Renewing your study before expiration
- Obtaining approval for revisions before implementation
- Reporting Adverse Events
- Retention of Research Records
- Obtaining approval to conduct research at the VA
- Notifying other parties about this project’s approval status

Should the nature of the study change or you need to revise the protocol in any manner please contact this office prior to implementation.

**Study Team:**

Trevor Bopp Co-Investigator
LIST OF REFERENCES


Candaele, K., & Dreier, P. (2004, August 7). Athletes deserve to be heard on significant political issues. Detroit Free Press, pp. 7A.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Turick was born in Erie, Pennsylvania to Stacey Singer and Robert Turick, Jr. He grew up in Springboro, Pennsylvania, where he first developed a passion for sports. He studied sport administration at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, graduating in May 2012 with a B.S. in physical education and sport, concentration in sport administration. After graduation, Robert attended Bowling Green State University and studied sport administration under the advisement of Dr. Amanda Paule-Koba, graduating in August 2014 with a M.Ed. in human movement, sport, and leisure studies, concentration in sport administration. Next, Robert attended the University of Florida and studied sport management under the advisement of Dr. Trevor Bopp, graduating in August 2018 with a Ph.D. in health and human performance, concentration in sport management.

His research focuses on studying social issues in sport, with a specific focus on racial and ethnic discrimination in sport and student-athlete well-being. He is currently working on projects related to racial tasking, racial pasts of sport facility honorees, and internship and practicum opportunities for student-athletes. He is a member of the North American Society for Sport Management and the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport. He will move to Muncie, IN as he accepted an Assistant Professor of Sport Administration position in the School of Kinesiology at Ball State University.