A Five Year Update of African-American NCAA DI-FBS Coaches

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Based on previous research it is reasonable to expect the racial composition of football coaching staffs to emulate the racial composition of football student athletes (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998). Such is not the case at the elite level of college football. In 2008-09 at the Division I level, 45.6% of all student athletes were African American (Zgonc, 2010b) compared to only 5.1% and 24.1% (HBCUs excluded) of African-American head and assistant coaches, respectively (Zgonc, 2010a). Such racial dissonance provides validation for inquiries into potential and various forms of discrimination. One such form is that of institutional discrimination; the idea that within an industry (e.g., college football coaching), certain means have been developed or manifested by which control and influence over institutional factors and access is maintained by the dominant group (McCrudden, 1982). The resultant impact has been found to lead to lower levels of career success, career satisfaction, and upward mobility (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005).

In 1993, Anderson addressed the potential existence of institutional discrimination in college football. Using data from the 2005 season, Finch, McDowell, and Sagas (2010) replicated his study. Both studies concluded that institutional and access discrimination remains a potential deterrent in achieving a more diverse and equal representation of racial minority head coaches. With the recent noteworthy increase in representation of African-American college football coaches, this study sought to examine and compare the career paths of all DI-FBS coaches examined in the abovementioned studies. The following research questions were designed with this aim; as well as to expand the work on institutional discrimination by assessing potential homologous reproduction and access discrimination.

Research Question 1: What is the proportion of African-American and White head and assistant coaches in DI-FBS in 2010, and do these proportions differ from those published by Finch et al. (2010) and Anderson (1993)?

Research Question 2: Will White head coaches have more White assistant coaches on their staff than African-American head coaches, and conversely, will African-American head coaches have more African-American assistant coaches on their staff than White head coaches?

A series of Chi-square analyses were utilized to determine potential differences over time in the racial demographics and playing and coaching positions of all current coaches. To answer Research Question 1, a Chi-square analysis determined potential differences in the current proportion of African-American and White head coaches, offensive and defensive coordinators, and assistant coaches compared to those published by Finch et al. (2010) and Anderson (1993). Chi-square analyses were also run on playing and coaching experience of all assistant coaches and head coaches to determine any possible differences from past time frames. A Chi-square analysis was also run to assess the racial make-up of African-American and White head coaches’ coaching staffs to determine if any differences exist.

With regards to research question 1, significant positive trends were witnessed among African-American coaching representation among the critical positions of head coach, $\chi^2 (df = 2, n = 319) = 9.05, p = .01$, and defensive coordinators, $\chi^2 (df = 2, n = 326) = 7.21, p < .05$; as well as among assistant coaches, $\chi^2 (df = 2, n = 2114) = 36.26, p < .000$. Further analysis revealed a significant difference in the representation of White assistant coaches, $\chi^2 (df = 5, n = 1005) = 46.26, p < .000$. The number of White assistant coaches has decreased at each coaching position except for that of running backs and wide receivers, where their presence has more than doubled since 1990. Significant differences were found in answering research question 2, such that White head coaches were more likely to have White assistant coaches than African-American assistant coaches and vice versa, $\chi^2 (df = 2, n = 1024) = 7.52, p < .05$.

The overall shift in the representation of African-American coaches in DI-FBS college football reveals a positive and long awaited trend, particularly at the assistant coach level. These findings alone seem to suggest that African Americans are finding greater acceptance and achievements in the college football coaching field. Greater parity was also found in the coaching and playing backgrounds of all coaching categories. Thus, the coaching career paths of current head coaches and coordinators appear to be paving a more equitable path for assistant and future coaches. While the trends noted in this study suggest positive change is occurring, the data also portray the existence of both institutional and access discrimination. These forms of biased hiring and promotion practices facilitate and maintain an underrepresentation of African-American coaches in DI-FBS football; and while

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the increased acceptance of upper-level coaches with diverse racial, playing, and coaching backgrounds suggests a positive shift towards racial equality among coaches, the movement for a balanced representation perseveres.