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Examining the Dearth of Black Head Coaches at the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision Level: A Critical Race Theory and Social Dominance Theory Analysis

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Forecasting future obstacles, W.E.B. Du Bois once envisaged color to be the dilemma facing the United States of America (USA) in the 20th Century. Wherein some individuals may disagree with this claim and counter by alleging America has moved towards a post racial society, unremitted racial structuring subsisted in the 20th century and has continued to cast a dark shadow in 21st century American society. The realm of sport is no exception as Black student-athletes comprise approximately half of the football participants at the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) level. Oddly enough, Black head coaches are severely underrepresented at this level. Hence, whereas athletic directors, boosters, and other persons of decision-making authority implicitly acknowledge Black student-athletes' athletic prowess, the institution of college athletics has historically devalued Black coaches' capacity to guide a team. This is to say, potential Black coaches have been deemed incapable, not up to par with their White counterparts. Due to this conceived incapableness, Black coaches are analogous to individuals in lower stratum of caste-like societies. Critical race theory (CRT) and social dominance theory (SDT) are utilized as epistemological lenses to further shed light on these dire circumstances. Elaborated connections, recommendations as well as implications for current and future Black head coaches are discussed.

Key Words: *Coaching, Social Change, Racism, Organizational Justice, Intercollegiate Athletics, Football Bowl Subdivision, Critical Race Theory, Social Dominance Theory*

The land of the free, the land of prosperity, or better yet, the land of opportunity. These are all terms synonymous with the United States of America (USA); however, to what extent do these really hold true? Indeed, citizens and individuals living within the USA enjoy many life luxuries which others living outside our borders do not. Nevertheless, contemporary USA still tussles to disengage itself with its gloomy past of racial injustice and discrimination, struggles which cast doubt on the aforementioned life liberties. Such is the case within the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Here lies a situation in which Black coaches are largely denied the opportunity to become head coaches. In essence, the current circumstances transpiring in the FBS corroborate research done by scholars concerning access discrimination among Black coaches in college football. For instance, Cunningham and Sagas (2004) found that Black coaches identified opportunities for advancement to be minimal, while also attaining low scores on “career satisfaction of coaches, number of promotions received, and organizational proximity” (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005, p. 773) compared to their White counterparts.

Forde (2003) postulated many football programs are continuing to “pitch a shutout” when it comes to hiring Black head coaches, therefore nullifying a notion of colorblindness. The institution of college football has remained exclusive, permitting an overwhelming number of White males access to head coaching positions, while denying the same opportunities to Black coaches (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005). Essentially, a racial hierarchy has been created at the FBS level (Associated Press, 2008) which perpetuates the stereotypical belief that Blacks are most fruitfully utilized on the field at positions such as running back and wide receiver but do not possess the proper skill set(s) to be successful head coaches. Consequently, many Black coaches have found attaining FBS head coaching jobs to be extremely difficult.

Certainly, the United States’ past history has its flaws. Thus, any attempt to understand or address Black/White racial inequalities in the American context must first consider America’s highly problematic historical record of race-based systems of oppression and abuse. For example, it was Allen (1997) who stated the White race was conceived in order to facilitate African slave oppression. To further illustrate, the forthcoming comments made by then Alabama Governor George Wallace during his 1963 inaugural address further demonstrate United States’ tumultuous race relations between Black and White:

In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny . . . and I say . . . segregation today . . . segregation tomorrow . . . segregation forever (Alabama Department of Archives & History, 2002).

Over four decades have passed since Wallace uttered this declaration, sentiments surely held by many White individuals at the time. Keeping in mind reforms and legislation passed since then (i.e. Civil Rights Act of 1964), the line Wallace mentioned appears to be well and alive in the FBS today; a line not to be crossed by aspiring Black head coaches. This is to say an emerging caste has been created for Black coaches, thus illustrating the power brokers (e.g. White athletic directors, boosters, and university presidents) have clasped to the principles articulated by George Wallace. Although there have been a few exceptions, not to mention the recent influx of Black head coach hires,

potential Black coaches have historically been unable to ascend to head coach while White coaches are afforded the opportunity to freely do so.

Black head coach underrepresentation in the FBS has certainly garnered attention in recent years; from mainstream media (e.g. Chadiha, 2008; Forde, 2008; Lapchick, 2009) to scholars and educators (e.g. Brooks & Althouse, 2000; Cunningham, Bruening, & Straub, 2006; Cunningham & Sagas, 2005), individuals have raised questions pertaining to this emerging caste system. Recent hires culminating the 2009 season illustrate progress being made compared to 2008 season's end in which the FBS had merely seven Black head coaches out of a possible 120 teams. This equated to approximately six percent and obtainment of an F for lack of racial diversity amongst head coaches on the Racial and Gender Report card disseminated by the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (Lapchick, 2009).

Despite the interest and latest hires of Black head coaches, it is our contention due diligence has not been given to this matter. In attempt to apply theory to help explain this underrepresentation of Black head coaches, we have employed both critical race theory (CRT) and social dominance theory (SDT) as epistemological lenses. Therefore, the primary purpose of this manuscript is to employ CRT & SDT to historically analyze the dearth of Black head coaches at FBS schools/programs. In doing so, we hope to shed new light on this timely and significant issue by using the theoretical framework to explain the historical lack of Black head coaches at FBS programs. The reason why we have centered our analysis on FBS is because, for all intents and purposes, the FBS is widely considered the pinnacle of college football (Roy, Graeff, & Harmon, 2008). This is highlighted by the garnered media attention, commercialization, revenue generation, and superior competition (just naming a few) the FBS engenders. Also contributing to the manuscript will be the caste-like system arrangement in the FBS, discussion of the current state of affairs in FBS, discussion of relevant works concerning hiring practices, followed by the theoretical framework and recommendations.

Caste System

A caste system is defined as a "rigid social system in which a social hierarchy is maintained generation after generation and allows little mobility out of the position to which a person is born" (Bogard, Gilbert, Jones, Nida, Swanson, & Young, 1997, p. 1). An integral component of many caste systems is rooted in the pigmentation of one's skin. For instance, *varna*, the Portuguese word for caste, refers to color and racial differences existing between the conquered and their conquerors (Bogard et al., 1997). Frequently forced into lesser jobs than higher castes, those coming from lower castes are often subjugated to such work due to the differentiation in skin color (Varna, 2009).

In ancient India, fairer-skin Aryans were afforded more life opportunities as opposed to darker skinned aboriginals (Varna, 2009). Though this classification system is often synonymous with the Indian structure of social stratification, caste systems were and continue to operate in multiple societies throughout Africa and Asia (Swarns, 2003; www.irinnews.org, 2005). Known as Africa's lost tribe, the Somali Bantu were taken from the coasts of Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania by Arab slave ships and brought to Somalia over two centuries ago. Persecuted and enslaved by the lighter skinned majority because of the color of their skin, the Somali Bantu

were subjected to unpleasant treatment (Swarns, 2003). Moreover, Yemen's Akhdam face similar circumstances; with their descendants coming from Ethiopia, they are non-resembling of Yemen's aboriginal inhabitants (www.irinnews.org, 2005). To further illustrate, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates 250 million people are discriminated against because they were born into a caste of lower social status (www.unicef.org).

Employing the caste system setup will draw attention to the barriers potential Black head coaches face at FBS institutions. As the following section will demonstrate, Black coaches relegated to the lower caste are too often not afforded the prospects their upper caste White coach counterparts receive.

Contextualizing the State of Affairs

What makes the underrepresentation of Black head football coaches ever more bewildering is the overrepresentation of Black athletes who play at FBS institutions. Representing approximately 50% of participants (Lapchick, 2009), the thought would be that these individuals would easily transition into head coaching position if desired; as demonstrated, however, this has failed to be the case. In fact, these Black athletes are a key player in the revenue generation of these institutions. For instance, top players often have their jerseys sold in merchandise stores. Despite not having their names on the back of the jerseys, it is known who wears that particular jersey on game days. When Black athletes represent this substantial portion of the total participation, and further are able to assist in the revenue generating process, but then be deemed incapable of attaining head coaching jobs, it sends a message that Blacks are good enough to play but not to coach.

Furthermore, recent years have demonstrated multiple occasions in which aspiring Black coaches, with the qualifications to do so, have been sidestepped, allowing the pervasiveness of White head coaches to remain intact. In 2003 when the University of Alabama dismissed their head coach Mike Price, the thought was Sylvester Croom (aspiring Black head coach) would be hired for the position. Croom had the credentials, including more experience than any other candidate, and was thought to be the most viable applicant for the job. Instead, the University of Alabama decided to hire Mike Shula (a White coach), thus disregarding Croom's pedigree (Wade, 2004).

The number of Black assistant coaches, representing 23.8% of assistant coaches, is plentiful when compared to the number of head coaches (Lapchick, 2009). However, those who desire to become head coaches are not obtaining the positions. As the following cases will exemplify, the line drawn in the dust by Wallace continues to exist, furthering the caste-like structure in FBS. For instance, after Dennis Francione's resignation in 2007, Texas A&M University wasted little time in finding a replacement by interviewing only one candidate, Mike Sherman (Cessna, 2007). Additionally, the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) hired Huston Nutt two days after firing the preceding coach, Ed Orgeron (Cessna, 2007). Even more recently, Auburn University hired Gene Chizik, a White coach who had amassed a head coaching record of 5-19 at Iowa State University. This hire came over the highly qualified Turner Gill (Black and current head coach at Kansas University), who recently rejuvenated the University of Buffalo's football program after numerous disappointing seasons. His team had recently come off an 8-5 season where they upset previously undefeated Ball State in the Mid-American Conference (MAC) championship. The Auburn incident came to the forefront in part because Charles

Barkley, former Auburn basketball standout, criticized his former school for their recent hire. Barkley articulated the following:

I think race was the No. 1 factor... You can say it's not about race, but you can't compare the two résumés and say [Chizik] deserved the job. From the coaches they interviewed, Chizik probably had the worst résumé (Schlabach, 2008).

Auburn and the previously mentioned universities' reluctance to hire a Black candidate is too often the case in the FBS. The source of such reluctance can be attributed to many factors. For instance, the hiring of head football coaches in many FBS programs incorporates many stakeholders/power brokers (i.e. donors/alums, Athletic Director, school president, media, community leaders, and executive search firms). It is feasible these individuals, too, ascribe to notions held by former Governor Wallace. Nevertheless, the actions on the part of these stakeholders illustrate little regard for organizations such as the Black Coaches & Administrators (BCA) "whose primary purpose is to foster the growth and development of ethnic minorities at all levels of sports both nationally and internationally" (Harrison, 2009). The actions on the part of FBS programs and the existence of organizations such as the BCA, lead us to needed discussions of relevant report cards germane to this conversation.

Report Cards on Collegiate Demographics and Hiring Practices

Black Coaches & Administrators' (BCA) Hiring Report Card

History

In lieu of the historical practice of FBS programs historically shunning Black coaches from obtaining head coaching positions, the BCA has taken action to facilitate Black coaches' transition into head coaching positions by partaking in lobbying and other promoting feats; namely its annual Hiring Report Card (HRC) disseminated by the University of Central Florida's Robeson Research Center is a key component of these exploits. Purpose mentioned above, the BCA's mission statement chiefly concerns participation of minorities in sport, to afford educational and professional development programming and scholarships to those desiring careers in athletics, and lastly to supply youth and other diverse groups of people the prospect to interact with the BCA (Harrison, 2009).

What it Measures

In order to accomplish its purpose and mission statement, the BCA's HRC grades participating institutions on five categories: communication, search committee, final candidates, time frame, and affirmative action (Harrison, 2009). The participating institutions are asked to respond to questions related to these five categories with each school receiving a numerical score, later to be turned into a letter grade (Harrison, 2009). Schools employing a coach of color are to be given two additional points to their final score (Harrison, 2009).

Report Highlights 2003-2009

Since the inaugural report card in 2003, Harrison (2009) reported optimism regarding the hiring practices of college institutions. Spanning the six years, schools generally earned a “C” grade. The highest percentage of institutions merited an “A” and combining “A’s and “B’s” represented 60%; however, 28% garnered a score of less than a “C” (Harrison, 2009). As of the latest installment of the yearly HRC, its sixth, there existed seven Black head coaches at the FBS level. Overall grades for the FBS were the following: eight “A’s”, four “B’s”, three “C’s”, three “D’s”, and four “F’s” (Harrison, 2009). At the time of this submission, there have since been additional hires (discussed later) as demonstrated by the bolded names in the table below (see Table I). In any case, Harrison (2009) concluded, although progress has been made in relation to hiring coaches of color, the process is continually in need of improvement as demonstrated by the decrease in percentage of people of color on search committees and percentage of interview candidates as compared to the previous HRCs.

Table I-Current FBS Head Coaches

Coach	Institution
Randy Shannon	University of Miami
Joker Phillips	University of Kentucky
Turner Gill	Kansas University
Charlie Strong	University of Louisville
Mike London	University of Virginia
Larry Porter	University of Memphis
Kevin Sumlin	University of Houston
DeWayne Walker	New Mexico State University
Mike Locksley	University of New Mexico
Ron English	Eastern Michigan University
Mike Haywood	Miami (OH)

2008 Racial and Gender Report Card: College Sport

Since the early 1990s, Dr. Richard Lapchick and his colleagues have created and distributed annual Racial and Gender Report Cards (RGRC) for many sport entities, including the NCAA, NBA, and NFL. Currently, these reports are generated from the University of Central Florida’s DeVos Sport Business Management Program. According to the DeVos Program website, “The RGRC is the definitive assessment of hiring practices of women and people of color in most of the leading professional and amateur sports and sporting organizations in the United States” (www.ucf.edu). In order to provide a definitive assessment of hiring practices, these reports recap and evaluate the percentages of athletic stakeholders (i.e. university presidents, coaches, and athletes) in sport. Furthermore, these reports illustrate a concerted effort on the part of educators to elucidate racially driven inequities within the realms of professional and amateur sport by measuring the percentages of White individuals compared to non-White individuals at a variety of job positions (i.e. conference commissioner).

The most recent RGRC for college sport was published in February of 2009. Highlighting the racial demographics of various college sport stakeholders including FBS university presidents, conference commissioners, head coaches, and athletes, the report gives “letter” grades based on percentages of White versus non-White individuals at these positions. Overall, college sport received a grade of “F” for race in FBS head football coaching positions, athletics director, sports information director, FBS conference commissioner, and FBS university president (Lapchick, 2009). The following table illustrates racial discrepancies in key stakeholder positions within college sport.

Table II-College RGRC 2008 Highlights

Position	% of Whites in Position	% of Blacks in Position	RGRC Grade
FBS Head Football Coach	94	5.1	F
Athletics Director**	90	7.2	F
Sports Information Director**	95	0.9	F
FBS Conference Commissioner	100	0	F
FBS University President	92.5	2.5	F

**Division I (FBS+FCS)

Nevertheless, actions taken by decision-making authority figures illustrate how aspiring Black head coaches are relegated to the outskirts of the FBS coaching carousel. For this reason, the seminal works by the likes of Harrison and Lapchick are increasingly important in college sports, particularly in the FBS. These two works, one being about the process (i.e. Harrison) and the other the outcome (i.e. Lapchick), do an excellent job of illustrating the practices and outcomes of the FBS and other intercollegiate athletic sports. Without such works that point out the flaws within the system, many of the issues we now see would go unnoticed. As evidenced by the recent hires as of late 2009, and early 2010, it could be argued the missions of these influential works are indeed being effective. Individuals such as Turner Gill and Charlie Strong both received head coaching jobs at reputable institutions.

Epistemological Frameworks

Critical race theory (CRT) and social dominance theory (SDT) are appropriate lenses in order to illumine the calamitous matters occurring in FBS pertaining to Black head football coaches. CRT focuses on the influence and pervasiveness of race and racism in American society and is utilized to better explain and understand the plight of current/aspiring Black head football coaches. SDT attempts to explain hierarchies existing in complex human social systems by asking why communities tend to be separated into group based hierarchies; essentially, its primary goal is to expand our conception of persistent dominance (Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004; Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 2001). SDT then is utilized to better explain and understand the hierarchical obstacles embedded within FBS programs as it pertains to hindering

the progress of aspiring Black head football coaches. Racially motivated separation via structures of dominance and the subsequent race-based inequity endured by the individual combine to create a unique set of hurdles for aspiring Black coaches that differentiate their experiences from White coaches. Therefore, the totality of the aforementioned separation allows CRT to be viewed as a subcomponent of SDT for the purposes of this manuscript.

CRT is a set of tenets pertaining to race in American society. It was born from the struggles associated with the Civil Rights Movement during the 1970s and was originally applied to matters of law by scholars that were frustrated with the lack of meaningful racial progress in American society (Taylor, 1998). One of the founding tenets of CRT is racism is normal and natural in American society and is reproduced and transmitted inter-generationally in such a way that the status and power differentials between Black people and White people are maintained and sustained (Brown, 2003). What could be implied, but must explicitly be stated is the world of sport is included within the confines of American society and is in no way immune to the far reach of racism. The stratification born from the inter-generational transmission of racist ideals is a means in which the negative stereotypes associated with the Black race (e.g. enhanced physical ability coupled with diminished intellect) become embedded in the psyche of American citizens, both Black and White. Black head coaches then must take measured steps to overcome inappropriate and unfounded labels of inferiority which conspire to reinforce the barricades preventing their ascension to the rank of head coach.

A second tenet of CRT germane to this discussion is the notion of Whiteness being a desirable and valuable commodity in American society (Harris, 1993). In other words the cultural “bar” to which all other races will be judged and critiqued is how they measure up to White ideals and White culture. In an article by Devos and Banaji (2005) entitled “American = White?”, the authors sought to determine if individuals believed that to be American is to be White. To do so, they conducted six studies to determine to what degree certain ethnic groups (e.g. Asian, African, and White) are linked to being an American. “The conclusion that can be drawn on the basis of the six studies presented here is unambiguous. To be American is to be White” (p. 463). Their findings bolster the idea that Whiteness is a desirable property in American society and one that Black citizens are forever prohibited from because of the impermeable boundaries of the color of their skin and ties to Black culture. Because CRT establishes racism as a normative structure of American societies and institutions which impact the daily lives of non-White citizens, it provides depth in understanding the extra obstacles placed before aspiring Black head coaches by highlighting the pervasiveness of racist ideologies permeated in the realm of sport (Hylton, 2009). In lieu of this, we will now provide an overview of SDT in order to illumine the hierarchal group-based structures (e.g. NCAA FBS programs) which serve to further compound the racialized experiences of non-White individuals put forth by the tenets of CRT.

Sidanius and Pratto (1999) designed a theory of social dominance grounded in the notion “that all human societies tend to be structured as systems of *group-based social hierarchies*” (p. 31, emphasis in original). The authors continue, “Among other things, the dominant group is characterized by its possession of a disproportionately large share of *positive social value*, or all those material and symbolic things for which people strive” (p. 31, emphasis in original). In the case of American racism, the positive social value is the property of Whiteness and the dissemination of Whiteness as being ideal. One of the most intriguing components of SDT is the trimorphic structure of group-based social hierarchy that posits societies are broken down into three systems of classification/categorization including the age system, gender system, and the

arbitrary-set system. The age and gender systems are self-explanatory, the arbitrary system however is predicated upon “an unusually high degree of arbitrariness” that conspires to determine the means in which in-groups and out-groups are defined (p. 33). One of the many human designed and socially constructed concepts included in the arbitrary-set system is race. Perhaps because the arbitrary-set system is constructed by humans unlike the age and gender systems, it “is also, by far, associated with the greatest degree of violence, brutality, and oppression” (p. 34).

Also crucial to SDT is the inclusion of economics, specifically economic surplus as it relates to defining and perpetuating group-based social hierarchies. The inclusion of economic surplus is critical to understanding how one socially constructed group (e.g. elite Whites in America) can dominate another group (e.g. Blacks in America) because with economic surplus comes power and with power comes control. Thus, money, power, and control are what enable those at the apex of the social hierarchy to ascribe meaning to, and widely disseminate negative stereotypes that “justify” and perpetuate their domination.

Sidanius and Pratto (1999) espouse there is an “apparently perfect correlation” amongst economic surplus maintenance and the introduction of arbitrary-set systems so that the arbitrary systems will be created in accompaniment with economic surplus (p. 36). The quintessential example of this is the chattel slavery system in America where White slave owners were able to reap massive economic surpluses from the free labor of Black slaves. White slave owners were able to generate enormous wealth which in turn gave them power, thus enabling their control of not only Black human beings, but control over how those human beings were regarded in American society. In other words, they were able to create and institute the racially motivated social hierarchy largely by the creation and dissemination of negative stereotypes. Over time, this racial hierarchy became an American custom that Black people were forced to endure and abide by without resistance or they could be punished unmercifully. Tragically, the same hierarchy designed in the 1700s is the very same structure that exists and persists to this day (Feagin, 2006).

Elite designed, arbitrary-based systems of exclusion born from the chattel slavery system are maintained to this day largely because of the centralization of wealth and power. Wealth and power differentials coupled with the pervasiveness of negative racialized stereotypes helped those at the top of the racial hierarchy justify their abhorrent treatment of Black individuals for years. Over the last few centuries these stereotypical notions have established White as superior and Black as inferior especially with regard to mental aptitude (Feagin, 2006). This leaves Black coaches in a precarious position as they attempt to transcend their caste-like existence in the FBS because historically these men have predominately been deemed incapable of holding such positions of decision-making authority.

CRT and SDT are utilized as dovetailing frameworks because they intertwine on many levels. With the world of sport’s inclusion under the umbrella of American society, it is subject to the same racially motivated practices and policies that permeate the everyday existence of Black Americans. Since Black head football coaches make up a dismal portion of NCAA FBS programs, not coincidentally dominated by elite White males in positions of power and authority (e.g. head coach, athletic director, conference commissioner), the Black head football coach is indubitably subjected to the normalcy of racism as dictated by CRT and the arbitrary-set systems outlined by SDT. Thus, combining these two frameworks help better understand and explain the discrepancies that persist between the hiring of Black head football coaches and White head football coaches at FBS programs.

Discussion

One of the main focal points of this manuscript was to draw upon the similarities between Black coaches in FBS and individuals coming from lower echelons of caste-like societies. Using the caste system as a reference point, coupled with the employment of two relevant theories, further insight is given concerning the ominous challenges confronted by Black coaches attempting to become head coaches at the FBS level. Below, we discuss the relationships emerging from the previously discussed caste system and theories.

In an attempt to illumine the circumstances faced by potential Black coaches, we situated this manuscript utilizing caste systems. In doing so, we make the connection concerning Black coaches and individuals comprising lower rankings in societies where caste systems subsist. Bogard et al. (1997) explained individuals not born into upper castes often face restrictions on occupation and personal contact with members outside their caste. Aspiring Black head coaches face many of these same restrictions. Operating as if they were individuals born into lower castes, Black coaches are largely unable to acquire the employment they desire because of their darker skin tone.

While many Black coaches play collegiately, sometimes professionally, they later come back as assistant coaches only to be shunned from becoming head coaches. A relevant example is Charlie Strong, recently hired head football coach at the University of Louisville. He was formerly the defensive coordinator for the Florida Gators. In a statement made during his assistant coaching days at the University of Florida, Strong stated that race was "the seminal factor removing him from head coach consideration during his 25 years in college football" (Associated Press, 2009b). Certainly a set of conditions unwelcomed by Black coaches, the reality of oppression is allowed to carry on by FBS institutions and athletic departments. The abovementioned stakeholders (i.e. athletic directors, school presidents, etc) provide similar circumstances for Black coaches because they consent for the state of affairs to continue. While current and aspiring White coaches play the role of individuals in upper castes, Black coaches are outside this realm and, for the most part, veered to assistant coaching jobs and head coaching jobs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Because college football has historically shunned Black coaches from becoming head coaches, SDT serves as a useful analytic tool to illumine on the state of affairs, especially as it relates to caste systems. Key concepts such as group based hierarchies, human social systems, and discrimination all coincide with the occurrences allowed to transpire by White elites. Furthering the caste system setup, SDT allows us to further take into account subjugation and discriminate practices on the part of suppressed groups.

As we have discussed, the FBS has created a hierarchal classification in which White elites occupy one caste while Black coaches comprise the other. As witnessed by the low number of Black head coaches, there seems to be minimal prospects for head coaching opportunities. These unfortunate circumstances give credence to a prime facet of SDT, namely the existence of an in-group/out-group relationship (Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 2001). When referencing this in-group, out-group relationship, Sidanius et al. (2001) assert there is a nominal degree of possible movement across groups. Situations such as this further implement the caste-like system in that members in caste-like societies also face restrictions on who they can have contact with (Bogard et al. 1997).

Related to the points above, the in-group/out-group dynamic would cease to exist if it were not for individuals who are set in their ways and wish to preserve what previous individuals have instructed them to put into practice. In other words, for this caste-like classification system to continue to function, White athletic directors, school presidents, boosters, etc. must carry with them the same practices previous Whites elites did. It is here where these individuals empower those they see fit to continue the process left for them to carry on. Hence, the cycle continues making it increasingly difficult for Black head coaches to attain head coaching positions.

We also situated this manuscript within the framework of CRT, which is an analytic and explanatory device permitting scholars to investigate issues of race and racism in society. Furthermore, CRT takes into account the role of institutions by drawing on the experiences and perspectives of those groups affected by racism (Hylton, 2009). Two of the CRT tenets are especially pertinent to our examination of the underrepresentation of Black head coaches: 1) the historical social construction of race and the embedded nature of racism in American society and 2) highlighting the existence of White dominant ideology, or Whiteness.

Notable individuals involved in college football have demonstrated how race continues to be an issue in the hiring of Black head coaches at the FBS level. Take the aforementioned comments made by Charlie Strong and Charles Barkley, both of whom believe race has been the influential factor not allowing Strong (in the past) and other aspiring Black head coaches to obtain head coaching jobs (Associated Press, 2009b; Schlabach, 2008). Additionally, referenced earlier was how Pat Forde (a White man) stated college football programs continue to pitch a “shut out” when it comes to hiring Black head coaches (Forde, 2003). Such sentiments fall in line with CRT’s underscoring tenet: racism is prevalent in American culture. This corroborates West’s (1994) contention that “race matters” or is still a significant concern with which we should be interested.

We believe the central tenet of CRT, namely the normalcy of racism in American society, stands alone in providing insight and explanatory power when examining the lack of Black head coaches at FBS programs. However, Whiteness and White ideology, while being standalone tenets in CRT, are viewed in this discussion as the link connecting the two theoretical frameworks of CRT and SDT into a unified one. It is our contention that the notion of Whiteness ascribed to in American society fuels the racial divide that is foundational in the arbitrary systems outlined by SDT. If Whiteness was not desirable and/or optimal, the hegemonic structures embedded within American society, and those who govern them, change dramatically. This then would alter the racial landscape, and subsequent power differentials within sport and society. If the pervasiveness of Whiteness and White ideologies did not form a basis for arbitrary-set systems, Black coaches would likely be granted greater access to head coaching jobs at FBS programs.

There was once a time in which Black athletes were not allowed at predominantly white institutions of higher education (PWIHE). For instance, the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) did not have a Black football player until 1963 when Darryl Hill broke the color barrier (Associated Press, 2008b). Nowadays, it is common to witness Black football players partaking in contests, equating to nearly fifty percent of the participants at the FBS level (Lapchick, 2009). Some would argue this statistic to be indicative of progress being made as it relates to race and sport. CRT, however, would argue such assertions are rather camouflages for the self-interest of the dominant, hegemonic group of decision-making Whites; this group of Whites will tolerate or allow for so called “progress” only when they also promote White self-interest. Singer (2005) spoke on this matter when he alluded to the situation in which Blacks were given permission to

participate in athletic completion with Whites. This concession was merely allowed due to the extra revenue that could be generated by the inclusion of Black male athletes.

Recommendations

Below, we have listed a few recommendations in order to ameliorate the circumstances at the FBS level. It is understood no issue is ameliorated in a day or any short time period, but rather in small incremental steps allowing what is proposed to take its course. The recommendations proposed address White privilege, FBS borrowing lessons from professional leagues, offering coaching fellowships, possible governmental action, and lastly a caution to aspiring Black coaches.

White Privilege

Through this manuscript we have utilized CRT and SDT, both dealing with groups subjected to a privileged dominant in-group. In conjunction with both of these frameworks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1964) wrote, “Lamentably it is a historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily” (as cited in Eibach & Keegan, 2006, p. 466). To this end, Blum (2008) pronounced there must be a focus on Whiteness in order for individuals to see societal injustices. As we move forward in the 21st Century, conversations concerning race and the reality facing Black coaches must come to the forefront in order to correct current occurrences. For instance, the aforementioned stakeholders (i.e. donors/alums, athletic directors, president, media, community leaders, and executive search firms) should consider these conversations because in most cases, these are the individuals who have the most “say so” in choosing the next head football coach. Reaching out to these individuals to commence such conversations is a start to the process of ameliorating current injustices. These conversations could take place at the annual NCAA convention, conference (e.g. Big 10, Big 12, SEC, Pac-10, ACC, and Big East). Speakers educated on this historical issue should be invited to speak to initiate these talks. These yearly meetings usually gather large groups of people coming from universities all over the country. This provides an excellent avenue through which fellowship between these stakeholders can begin.

McIntosh (1990) stated privileges are like “an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks” (p. 4). Blum (2008) commented the native speaker must be sensitive to the non-native speaker’s situation. In other words, those individuals encompassing these privileges (Whites) must realize their privilege and join the cause to disband this cycle. Such incidences of White privilege are prevalent throughout college football, and namely the FBS. For instance, take Tyrone Willingham (Black) and Charlie Weiss (White), both of whom are former Notre Dame head football coaches. While Weiss was afforded the opportunity to coach five seasons (ESPN News Services, 2009), Willingham (the first Black coach of any sport at Notre Dame) was only granted a tenure of three seasons (ESPN News Services, 2004). In fact, Willingham was the only coach in Notre Dame history to be fired before their contract had ended (ESPN News Services, 2004). If one examines the win-loss records of these two coaches, what is interesting is that Weiss compiled a worse three season win-loss record compared to that of Willingham. Despite this, Weiss was permitted to continue.

The Professional Model

In part because the collegiate ranks involve student-athletes, rarely would we suggest they look to professional leagues to model themselves after. In this case, however, the NCAA, along with the FBS, should witness the progress made in the National Football League (NFL) as well as Major League Baseball (MLB) as exemplars for hiring minority individuals as head coaches (managers in MLB's case). Major League Baseball implemented a policy years ago requiring teams to create a list of qualified racial minority candidates which they must interview for every manager or general manager position opening (Barker, 2007). Because of this policy, minority managers and general managers in baseball has significantly increased, having tripled since the policy was put into operation (Wolverton, 2005).

Another illustration can be seen in the NFL's Rooney Rule requiring organizations to interview a minority candidate for head coach openings (Wolverton, 2005). Such a rule was put into effect due to a lack of Black head coaches existing at its inception. The outcome has proved to be nothing less than optimism for aspiring Black head coaches. Recently, the NFL had zero Black head coaches but according to the last Racial and Gender Report Card, there are currently six out of a possible 32 teams; this equates to roughly 19% (Lapchick, 2009).

Also worth noting is the policy's goal. The aim is not to force initiatives in which these teams must hire a Black coach but to rather consider these individuals for jobs. Such an example can be seen in Mike Singletary, the current coach of the San Francisco 49ers of the NFL. After not receiving an offer after three interviews for head coaching positions (Chadiha, 2008), Mike Singletary finally earned the opportunity to lead an NFL team. It is a possibility they will not be successful their first time around; or even the third time around in Singletary's case. However, it is with hope, positive elements came from those previous interviews which allowed Singletary to land his first head coaching job. Further, positive impressions made by Singletary and other aspiring Black head coaches on NFL owners and general managers during the interview process increase the likelihood of Black candidates being strongly considered for future vacancies.

Coaching Fellowships

Another feasible option for the FBS is to follow the model of NFL Hall of Fame head coach and former Stanford University head coach, Bill Walsh. Walsh mentored multiple prominent and noteworthy head coaches including Tony Dungy, Marvin Lewis, Dennis Green, and Tyrone Willingham (Tillman, 2007). Through these coaching fellowships, Walsh employed these individuals in positions (e.g. offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach) where they would gain the notoriety to make the leap to head coach; these were coaching positions such as offensive and defensive coordinator. The latest Racial and Gender Report card reported Blacks comprised 23.8% of assistant coaches (Lapchick, 2009).

Employing these coaching fellowships could occur by way of coaches identifying those Black athletes aspiring to become head coaches, a process initiated once the athletes report to their respective institutions. Certainly, there exists a viable pool of available Black athletes considering they represent approximately half of all Division I football participants (Lapchick, 2009). Thus, there exists ample opportunities for fellowship among all coaches, but if White head coaches are unwilling to provide opportunities for growth and experience to aspiring Black head coaches, the situation will exacerbate.

Caution

Our last recommendation is for those Black coaches opportune enough to receive a head coaching job. History has proven some Black coaches who have been hired are quickly let go after dismal seasons (e.g. Sylvester Croom). These individuals have to demonstrate caution as the nature of college football in this age is unlike decades past in which a coach was given an extended period of time. They have to ask themselves if the position they are seeking will better their position or damage it. Charles Barkley echoed this opinion when he stated his feelings towards the reoccurring instance:

My biggest problem with the black coaches is they're not getting jobs and they're getting [expletive] jobs when they are hired... They're not getting good jobs. They're not getting jobs where they can be successful. That's why I wanted Turner to get the Auburn job. He could win consistently at Auburn. You can't win consistently at New Mexico. You can't win consistently at Kansas State. He could have won at Auburn (Schlabach, 2008).

Generally, when Black coaches are bestowed the opportunity to preside over an FBS program, the team which they are taking over has suffered a disappointing year(s), ultimately setting the coach up for failure (Associated Press, 2008). In an era in which one mistake can lead to one's firing, much attention and vigilance must be exemplified by these aspiring Black head coaches. If it so happens they do not carry out the job they are expected to do, it may result in a shorter tenure as compared to a White coach in the same set of circumstances. This was certainly exemplified by the aforementioned scenario involving Tyrone Willingham and Charlie Weiss.

Conclusion

Implications

This article utilized CRT as well as SDT, as an epistemological framework, to further understand and illumine on current conditions pertaining to Black coach underrepresentation at the FBS level. W.E.B. Du Bois once stated in 1903 color would be the dilemma facing the United States in the 20th Century (Eibach & Keegan, 2006). Withstanding 20th Century harsh realities such as overt discrimination and systemic racism (Feagin, 2006), the 21st Century has witnessed continuous discriminate accounts as it pertains to Blacks in the sporting realm (Singer, 2005).

The true ability of Black head coaches will never be understood and appreciated if the same racialized feats are maintained. Allowing fair opportunity for Black coaches, one will be able to assess their capabilities, and see they too are proficient in handling head coaching positions. Few have been given this chance and more are needed. If the current state of affairs continues to transpire, the effects on aspiring Black head coaches could be detrimental. From current Black assistant coaches to Black student-athletes, trickling down to Black youth, sustained racial structuring in FBS could be damaging to the mental psyche. Opportunities tend to come open every year, but more often than not, White coaches assume the head coaching role as more Black head coaches are passed over. Prolonged engagement in this pattern could ultimately compel these individuals to stop seeking these head coaching positions.

Future Considerations

Future research concerning this pertinent issue could look to examine the possible effect Title VII and other governmental initiatives (e.g. Oregon Bill 3118) could have on the lack of Black head coaches at the FBS level. Government action is a possibility if the circumstances at the FBS level are not remedied in a timely fashion. In a meeting with Congress in February 2007, Reverend Jesse Jackson avowed the time has come “to make Title VII do for black coaches what Title IX did for women’s sports (Associated Press, 2007). Furthering the call for government participation, Floyd Keith, BCA Executive Director, declared “History has proven that in order for any significant progress to be made in eradicating a social injustice, legal action has been the catalyst for change” (Associated Press, 2007). After all, if congress representatives are bringing to the forefront Bowl Championship Series (BCS) “unfairness” (Associated Press, 2009a), one would think the potential for action pertaining to this matter is possible and hopefully likely.

Furthermore, we suggest individuals looking to interview Black coaches and conduct empirical qualitative studies could utilize CRT and/or SDT to further demonstrate the problems FBS suffers from. As explained earlier, a main tenet of CRT is to give voice to individuals who are silenced by employing storytelling and narratives, while also substantiating the centrality of knowledge. The testimonies given by Black coaches could be employed as counter-narratives, by illustrating the continued systemic practices transpiring in the FBS. In sum, these statements may perhaps confirm how race and racism subsists in American society as a whole and the FBS particularly. Researches employing qualitative inquiry will be able to go beyond the surface level, enabling them to gain a further understanding of not only individual perceptions but also contribute to the field in which relatively little research has been carried out.

Also utilizing qualitative inquiry, interviews involving the hegemonic group, (e.g. White coaches, White athletic directors), can be employed to understand their thoughts pertaining to the issue; essentially, this could be utilized to confront Whiteness since this group maintains the power in this dichotomous situation. Accordingly, this manuscript as well as possible future empirical studies has the potential to heighten the awareness of persons who may not be conscious of the circumstances surrounding the FBS. These could also inspire Blacks and others to incite change. In order for this change to occur, both Blacks and the individuals in the power holding positions must be able to come together as one collective group. It is with hope this article challenges individuals from these groups to come together to engage in meaningful dialogue.

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