



**DIVERSITY  
& INCLUSION**

# OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY PATTERNS VOLUME VI



**EXAMINING OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY PATTERNS:  
Access, Opportunity, Social Capital and Leadership in the NFL**

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**Principal Investigator and Lead Researcher:**

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at University of Central Florida**

A report presented by the National Football League.

We would like to dedicate the  
2017 Diversity and Inclusion Good Business Report  
to the late **Mr. Dan Rooney** for a legacy of creating access  
and opportunity for ethnic minority groups.



"We're pleased that the level of diversity at the Head Coach and  
General Manager position continues to grow, in large part, due to the success of  
the Rooney Rule. The Rooney Rule reflects the continued commitment of  
the NFL to diversity and inclusion, and it is part of  
Ambassador Rooney's enduring legacy."  
- Robert Gulliver

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## OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY PATTERNS: AN EXAMINATION OF LEADERSHIP, ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE RESHUFFLING EFFECT WITHIN THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL

**(Volume VI)**

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## MESSAGE FROM TROY VINCENT, NFL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF FOOTBALL OPERATIONS

As the NFL continues to lead the sports industry in promoting diversity in hiring, there are several considerations that play a role in our long-term success. Hiring a person to run a team, to coach a position, to oversee training, scouting, conditioning, or any other matter of club operations—front office or on the field—is a social science, involving talent, trust, relationship, personality and many more both tangible and intangible factors.

We are learning from our progress, and building a model for developing a sustainable diverse talent pool. The Occupational Mobility Report documents our efforts—both our successes and our challenges—and assists us in achieving a future where diversity makes the best better and the sum of the parts is greater than the whole.

One of the challenges we face is the line between the intended results of rules and policies, such as the Rooney Rule, and the ratio of qualified talent versus positions given our specialized workforce. This line is often blurred because of the natural tendency to view hiring from the lens of optics while assuming that skill, talent, ability, and trust and the other factors of hiring are equal. For example, the Rooney Rule doesn't take into account that opportunities are limited because there are people in the front office, coaching, and ownership who are actually doing a great job and are very capable and deserving of consideration for openings.

The fact of the matter is that private entities, such as our 32 Clubs, cannot be shamed or forced into hiring someone. The Rooney Rule provides a point of entry, but to solve the long-term conundrum of opportunities versus the number of teams that can provide those opportunities, development of highly qualified individuals is imperative.

That's why our partnership with Historic Black Colleges and Universities through the MEAC and SWAC is so very strategic. HBCUs specifically, and the NCAA generally, represent fertile ground to develop a qualified and sustainable pipeline of diverse candidates for our specialized workforce. There are great opportunities among these ranks because there is actual leverage for fairness in hiring practice through the public domain of the NCAA, Equal Opportunity Employment, and Title IX protections.

It is through these partnerships, as exemplified with the HBCUs, that the NFL can offer internships, symposia, resources, fellowships, and other educational efforts to augment our long-term strategic development and expansion of a qualified and diverse workforce. Each year, the Occupational Mobility Report provides insight on our efforts to improve and assists us in evolving our go-forward strategies to develop and emphasize the characteristics, talents and skills needed for a diverse workplace

## MESSAGE FROM LEAD AUTHOR OF THE REPORT, DR. C. KEITH HARRISON

In February 2012, Mr. Troy A. Vincent Sr. called to see if my team could do a systemic and annual report related to the occupational mobility of the NFL in terms of head coaching vacancies. While the annual report celebrates its five-year anniversary, it has been expanded to include coordinators and general managers. The data indicate that progress has been made as 6 ethnic minority coaches have been hired since the first report was published in 2013 (including two recent hires). You can only improve what you measure and data-driven decisions continue to be a key movement that industry leaders value and prioritize when it comes to inclusion, diversity, and good business.

As we look to the future, there are still challenges as we strive toward equality. Hiring decisions are still subjective and in part based on implicit bias, trust, and just straight up nepotism in some instances. Two recent hires indicate that leaders in high places will take chances and break normative patterns which is good news for majority and minority leaders that seek to become coordinators, head coaches, and general managers. For example, John Lynch was given a six-year contract by the San Francisco 49ers with zero front office experience. Steve Sarkisian was given a second chance after some personal and health issues not only by the University of Alabama as a special assistant—but eventually calling the offensive plays in the national championship game versus Clemson on January 9, 2017. Sarkisian is now the offensive coordinator of the Atlanta Falcons the Super Bowl runner-ups and NFC champions.

In the final analysis, I highlight these two case examples of Lynch and Sarkisian, because their paths should motivate scholars and practitioners to continue to examine what is true equality and how does one's "mobility opportunity scale" expand regardless of their qualifications, experiences, skin color, and human mistakes? A quote by Chris Rock about the historical/traditional status quo (white males) sums up what I think the challenge is for ethnic minorities in the NFL and in other leagues at the professional and collegiate level: "I want the license to be able to come back (after making mistakes) and learn (gain experience and wisdom)."

Progress has been made the last five years of these empirical and data-based reports. I thank the NFL for the opportunity that my team has been given to bridge theory with practice each year we publish the occupational mobility project.

## REPORT BACKGROUND

In 1921, Fritz Pollard became the first person of color hired as a head coach of a professional football team. Pollard, an African American, coached the Akron Pros and Hammond Pros from 1921-1925. Employment opportunities in professional football for coaches of color were limited following the leadership of Pollard. From the time of Pollard's last game coaching in 1925, it would be over 40 years before another person of color would serve as the head coach of a professional football team (and over 60 years before the next African American head coach). Tom Fears, who is Latino, became the first ethnic minority head coach hired in the modern NFL era in 1967. Art Shell became the first African American head coach in the modern NFL era when he was hired by the Los Angeles Raiders in 1989. From January 1963 to February 2017, there have been only 17 different African American head coaches and three Latino head coaches in the NFL. As of February 2017, eight head coaches of color led NFL teams as compared with 24 White NFL head coaches. Five of the eight current NFL head coaches of color have been hired since January 2014. This NFL Diversity & Inclusion research report series began analyzing data on occupational mobility patterns and making data-driven policy and best practices recommendations commencing at the start of the 2012 NFL regular season.

Previous studies on NFL coaches and other key team leaders have generally focused on the effectiveness of the Rooney Rule (for example, analyzing the hiring process and proposing new strategies to increase the number of head coaches of color) and comparing the win/loss records of head coaches (for example, determining whether coaches of color are provided with a true meaningful opportunity to turn around a team with a losing record) (see Cochran & Mehri, 2002; Madden & Ruther, 2011; Thornton, 2009).

The current study on occupational mobility patterns expands and complements existing research within this space via an extensive analysis related to whether ethnic minorities face occupational access barriers after one or more stints as a head coach in the NFL. In addition, this research study examines occupational access barriers and mobility patterns with respect to NFL general managers, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and other primary NFL team position coaches—for example, quarterbacks coach, wide receivers coach, tight ends coach, running backs coach, offensive line coach, linebackers coach, defensive line coach and defensive backs (secondary) coach. The current empirical research study aims to address the following research questions:

1. *Do coaches and other leaders of color within the NFL face actual (and perceived) access barriers with respect to occupational mobility patterns?*
2. *What factors and variables impact and influence the occupational mobility patterns of coaches and other leaders of color within the NFL?*
3. *What are examples of practical and innovative strategies with respect to improving career opportunities for coaches and other leaders of color within the NFL?*

Based on the findings of the current study, attention must focus on retention, career progression, continued access and “life after being a head coach” in addition to the noteworthy focus of the Rooney Rule on initial entry/access for ethnic minorities. The findings of the current study indicate that, historically, NFL teams have been reluctant to hire a person of color for a head coach, offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator position after a person of color has previously separated from a head coach position in the NFL. For example, since 1963, 104 White individuals have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator after a first NFL head coach opportunity, whereas only 15 men of color have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator after a first head coach opportunity. In addition, since 1963, 23 White individuals have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator after a second NFL head coach opportunity, whereas only three men of color have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator after a second head coach opportunity.

However, the hiring of Lovie Smith and Jim Caldwell as “second opportunity” NFL head coaches in 2014 along with the hiring of Hue Jackson as a “second opportunity” NFL head coach in January 2016 serve as indicators of improvement and hope<sup>1</sup>. As of February 2017, ten out of the 20 total head coaches of color from 1963-2017 have earned a second opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. A primary challenge for candidates of color is breaking into the head coach pipeline, as many head coaches and key position coaches continue to get “reshuffled” thereby preventing new talent from entering the pipeline.

The following review of literature section provides an overview of relevant empirical research on occupational mobility patterns in the sport business industry. Social capital theory, particularistic mobility thesis and performance-reward bias constructs provide a foundational theoretical framework for the current research study.

<sup>1</sup> In March 2016, Lovie Smith became the first former NFL head coach of color to be named a head coach of a college football team in the Football Bowl Subdivision when he accepted the head football coach position at the University of Illinois.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY PATTERNS

Rider et al. (2016) researched racial disparity in NFL leadership positions and examined how “performance-reward bias (i.e., lesser rewards for equivalent performance) generates racial disparity in leadership by suppressing the rate at which minorities, relative to equally-performing whites, are promoted to positions considered prerequisite for organizational leadership” (p. 1). These scholars found that performance-reward bias was prevalent in lower level positions (e.g., position coaches)—for instance, coaches of color were initially hired into positions with inferior promotion prospects and then subsequently “stacked” into positions with similarly inferior promotion prospects. As explained by Rider et al. (2016), performance-reward bias “is a specific within-job mechanism that generates differential returns to position for equivalent performance in the same position . . . performance-reward bias implies that even when racial minorities are allocated to relatively promising positions they are less likely to continue ascending the corporate hierarchy as white, equivalently-performing position-holders” (pp. 2, 9). This empirical research study by Rider et al. (2016) suggests “pipeline programs designed to increase diversity in leadership by increasing diversity in lower level positions are undermined by performance-reward bias” (p. 6). For example, performance-reward bias in key lower level positions such as quarterbacks coach, linebackers coach and defensive backs (secondary) coach results in access barriers for men of color with respect to the inability of attaining key leadership positions such as offensive coordinator and defensive coordinator. Rider et al. (2016) found “clear evidence of a racial disparity in promotion prospects for NFL assistant coaches that has persisted for over two decades despite a high-profile intervention designed to advance the candidacies of minority candidates” (p. 36).

Day (2015) investigated the effects of job-level, task-based, segregation on racial differences in college football coaching promotions. Day (2015) examined the connection between occupational attainment of college coaches and the particularistic mobility thesis. The particularistic mobility thesis can be defined as “the predominant theoretical explanation for racial/ethnic differences in both authority attainment and promotions in the labor market, particularly in high-status professions” (p. 3). As explained by Day (2015), “According to the particularistic mobility thesis, performance indicators in high-level positions are inherently vague and uncertain and the characteristics that upper management looks for when considering promotions such as loyalty, leadership potential, trustworthiness, and achievement orientation are not easily measured and quantified. This opens promotion decisions to ‘particularistic manipulation,’ or the subjective (mis) perceptions of upper level managers” (p. 3). Day (2015) further explained that, as a result of these (mis) perceptions of key decision makers, “minority workers follow a more circumscribed pathway to high-level positions where they are limited to formal channels of mobility based on their objective experience, credentials and skills. White workers, on the other hand, not only have access to formal channels of mobility but also benefit from the subjective and sometimes biased assessments of their skills and abilities” (pp. 3-4). Day (2015) suggested that candidates of color experience “restricted access to jobs, occupations, and economic sectors that offer the opportunity to develop requisite human capital, social network contacts, and display the particularistic criteria necessary for promotion into high-status jobs and occupations has been implicated in divergent mobility outcomes for White and Black workers” (p. 2).

Scholars have previously examined how unconscious bias and aversive racism impact occupational mobility (for example, see Bridgeman, 2008; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; and Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Because these processes and biases are “subtle and operate largely by default” (Wang, 2006, p. 16), company decision-makers (e.g., general managers of NFL teams) are prone to categorize and stereotype with respect to a candidate's qualifications for a specific opportunity without any intent or conscious awareness. As explained by Bridgeman (2008), “many people who do not consider themselves to be racist or sexist and who generally may want to have a diverse working environment may still select people for participation in ways that are biased and discriminatory” (p. 267). Collins (2007) examined the impact of the Rooney Rule and the importance of “social capital.” Collins suggested, “due in large part to unconscious bias, these networks tend to reinforce traditional power structures by limiting hiring practices and/or business transactions to other elites or acquaintances within the network . . . Since it is unconscious, this bias is neither cognitive nor intentional . . . unconscious bias influences head coaching selections through the internalization of stereotypes regarding African Americans’ intellectual inferiority and the establishment and maintenance of ‘old boy’ networks” (pp. 875, 876).

Social capital can be defined as “the goodwill that is engendered by the fabric of social relations and that can be mobilized to facilitate action” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 17). Social capital influences career success (see Gabbay & Zuckerman, 1998) and creates a richer pool of recruits for companies (see Fernandez,

Castilla, & Moore, 2000). Day and McDonald (2010) analyzed the “differential processes by which social capital influences occupational attainment of whites and racial minorities” with respect to collegiate football coaches and found that people of color often lack the social capital resources (i.e., resources embedded in networks) needed to facilitate occupational advancement (p. 140). Day and McDonald (2010) found that same race contacts and strong ties are positively associated with the number of promotions received by White coaches; however, those same ties were found to be the least effective for African American coaches because “a diverse set of weak-tied network resources offer the greatest opportunities for promotion among black coaches . . . access to higher status contacts also appears to be a more important predictor of mobility among black coaches than among white coaches” (p. 140).

Scholars such as Maume (1999) and Wilson et al. (1999) have found that individuals of color must invest more in personal relationships, attaining advanced education degrees, and accumulating substantial relevant work experience before job advancement prospects become equivalent to the promotion opportunities of White individuals. Rosette et al. (2008) developed a theory-based argument with respect to whether variables such as “institutional inequality” (Davis & Moore, 1945, p. 243; see also Acker, 2006) and “membership in powerful coaching families” (Greene, 2012, p. 131) have more of an impact in the hiring and evaluation processes than do the substantive skill sets of individuals.

Sagas and Cunningham (2005) analyzed social capital of college football coaches with respect to network size, strength of ties/relationships, racial similarity within network, contacts in higher levels of organization, and inter-organizational ties. Sagas and Cunningham (2005) in part found that “White coaches have more opportunities to accrue occupational experience because they are more likely to occupy positions” (p. 791). Sagas and Cunningham (2005) also highlighted past research that has indicated cross-race networking ties are typically weaker (i.e., less effective) than matching-race networking connections; however, candidates of color typically have a “much smaller set of ‘similar others’ from whom to develop professional relationships” (p. 791). This reality is significant as Sagas and Cunningham (2005) explained that the “lack of same-race ties among Black coaches thus can be detrimental to the development and success of Black coaches” (p. 791). In a similar empirical research study, Cunningham and Sagas (2005) analyzed the notion of access discrimination with respect to coaching positions in college athletics. These scholars found that, based on the predominance of same-race hiring practices, personnel decisions in college athletics are often influenced by “who you know who is racially similar” (p. 157).

Kilduff et al. (2016) recently extended the social network research literature with an empirical investigation related to the career mobility impact of aspiring NFL head coach candidates (i.e., “acolytes”)<sup>2</sup> developing “advantageous connections” with high-reputation industry leaders (e.g., NFL head coaches such as Bill Belichick and Mike Tomlin). These scholars investigated the occupational mobility patterns of 1,298 NFL head coaches and position coaches from 1980-2010 to determine the long-term significance of initially beneficial workplace ties between acolytes and high-reputation leaders. Kilduff et al. (2016) concluded, “affiliation with a successful leader can facilitate or damage career progress, even in an industry in which quantitative indicators of performance are routinely used to assess outcomes” (p. 371). Kilduff et al. (2016) observed that “high-reputation social connections can be considered not just as signals of underlying quality” but also as “lenses that potentially distort individuals’ qualities both beneficially (in terms of enhancing the value of prior performance) and detrimentally (in terms of ex post settling up)” (pp. 369-70). One of the primary practical implications of the research study was as follows: “The results concerning NFL promotions indicate an industry system in which social connections, rather than just skills and abilities, enable people to move into positions such as head coach” (p. 370).

Seebruck and Savage (2013) examined how an assistant coach’s race and the race of his supervisor (the head coach) interact to affect occupational mobility. Seebruck and Savage (2013) found that African American collegiate basketball assistant coaches working under African American head coaches (“black homophily”) were significantly disadvantaged with respect to the probability of earning a head coaching position; results indicated that while homophily (same race connection) is neither advantageous nor disadvantageous for White job candidates, it is disadvantageous for African American job candidates. As explained by Seebruck and Savage (2013), “this racially based disadvantage makes it difficult for minority job candidates to break through the glass ceiling and has real-world financial implications . . . effort should be directed at ensuring that white coaches continue to hire and sponsor capable minority assistant coaches” (pp. 75, 98).

<sup>2</sup> An “acolyte” can be defined as someone who has experience working on the same management team as one or more high-reputation leaders (see Kilduff et al., 2016).

This research study investigated data regarding NFL head coach demographics, tenure, and occupational mobility patterns from 1963-2017. This time period is used because 1963 serves as the first year that the NFL began to track relevant data on head coach mobility patterns. Based on the NFL archival human resource database on head coaches, these data were analyzed to determine occupational mobility patterns. Interim head coaches were not included in the data set with respect to determining the total number of people who have held head coaching positions in the NFL from 1963-2017. This study also contains data regarding NFL offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator and general manager demographics as well as tenure and mobility patterns from the start of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012)<sup>3</sup> to kickoff at Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017). This study also highlights mobility patterns of head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers during the approximate one-year period from the day following Super Bowl 50 (February 8, 2016) to kickoff at Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017). A specific emphasis is placed on the occupational mobility patterns of offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators because these two positions have historically functioned as the primary occupational pipelines for NFL head coach hires. This study also spotlights additional key head coach “pipeline positions” such as quarterbacks coach, linebackers coach and defensive backs (secondary) coach.

A comprehensive database of descriptive data was developed to analyze the career paths, organizational tenure and occupational mobility patterns of current NFL position coaches in conjunction with examining opportunities for these position coaches to earn promotions to coordinator or head coach positions. In addition, this study integrates descriptive data from recent relevant research conducted by the NFL related to occupational mobility and job success determinants of NFL head coaches.

Researchers verified the number of vacancies filled and individual separations, trajectories and occupational patterns of NFL head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers based on data provided by the NFL. For example, if an individual was a head coach for multiple NFL teams, this study counts that coach one time in the data set because this study focuses on an analysis of access, opportunity and coaching mobility (i.e., the number of individuals who have held head coach positions) instead of the total number of head coach vacancies from 1963-2017. This analytical framework was also applied to the occupational mobility patterns of offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers from 2012-2017.

The next section of this report presents the findings and results related to an extensive descriptive analysis on the occupational mobility patterns of over 300 current NFL head coaches, general managers, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and position coaches.

<sup>3</sup> This NFL Diversity & Inclusion research report series began analyzing data on occupational mobility patterns commencing at the start of the 2012 NFL regular season.

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Between February 8, 2016 (day following Super Bowl 50) and February 5, 2017 (day of Super Bowl LI), NFL teams hired a total of 30 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers. White individuals were hired for 22 of these positions. Only seven different men of color were hired for these 30 positions, as Anthony Lynn was hired as both an offensive coordinator and head coach during the data collection period. In addition, during this same time period 26 of the 32 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers who were fired, resigned, promoted or otherwise “mutually parted ways” with an NFL team were White individuals.

Tables 1–4 and Figures 1–5 provide a summary overview of key findings and results of the research study. The remainder of this section expands on the quantitative findings highlighted in Tables 1–4 and Figures 1–5. In addition, this section presents additional findings with respect to the occupational mobility patterns of select NFL position coaches.

### HEAD COACH CAREER PIPELINES & MULTIPLE HEAD COACH OPPORTUNITIES

**TABLE 1: HEAD COACH MOBILITY PATTERNS (2016-2017)\***

TEAM	NAME OF FORMER HEAD COACH	RACE OF FORMER HEAD COACH	NEXT OPPORTUNITY FOR FORMER HEAD COACH	NAME OF NEW HEAD COACH	RACE OF NEW HEAD COACH
Buffalo Bills	Rex Ryan	White	NFL Television Analyst at ESPN	Sean McDermott	White
Denver Broncos	Gary Kubiak	White	<i>Retired</i>	Vance Joseph	African American
Jacksonville Jaguars	Gus Bradley	White	Defensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Chargers	Doug Marrone	White
Los Angeles Chargers	Mike McCoy	White	Offensive Coordinator, Denver Broncos	Anthony Lynn	African American
Los Angeles Rams	Jeff Fisher	White	<i>No new position as of February 5, 2017</i>	Sean McVay	White
San Francisco 49ers*	Chip Kelly	White	<i>No new position as of February 5, 2017</i>	Kyle Shanahan	White

Date range for data: February 8, 2016 (day following Super Bowl 50) to February 5, 2017 (date of Super Bowl LI)

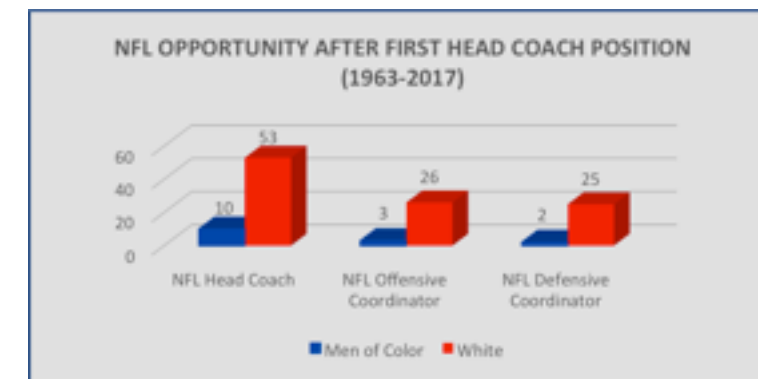
\*Note: Kyle Shanahan was named head coach of the San Francisco 49ers on February 6, 2017. This position was included in the data for this Volume VI report at the request of the NFL even though Shanahan was hired the day after Super Bowl LI, which took place on February 5, 2017.

As the above Table 1 illustrates, between February 8, 2016 (day following Super Bowl 50) and February 5, 2017 (day of Super Bowl LI), NFL teams hired four White head coaches. During that same time period, NFL teams hired two head coaches of color (Vance Joseph and Anthony Lynn). In addition, between the start of the 2012 NFL season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017), NFL teams hired 29 White head coaches. During that same time period, NFL teams hired six head coaches of color. Five of these head coaches of color remain current NFL head coaches; Lovie Smith served as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers during the 2014-2015 NFL seasons.

Six current NFL head coaches have been hired since Super Bowl 50 (February 8, 2016). Five of these six head coaches are first time NFL head coaches (Vance Joseph, Anthony Lynn, Sean McVay, Sean McDermott, and Kyle Shanahan). Only one of the six recently hired NFL head coaches (Doug Marrone) has prior NFL head coaching experience. New Jacksonville Jaguars head coach Doug Marrone previously served as head coach of the Buffalo Bills during the 2013-2014 NFL seasons.

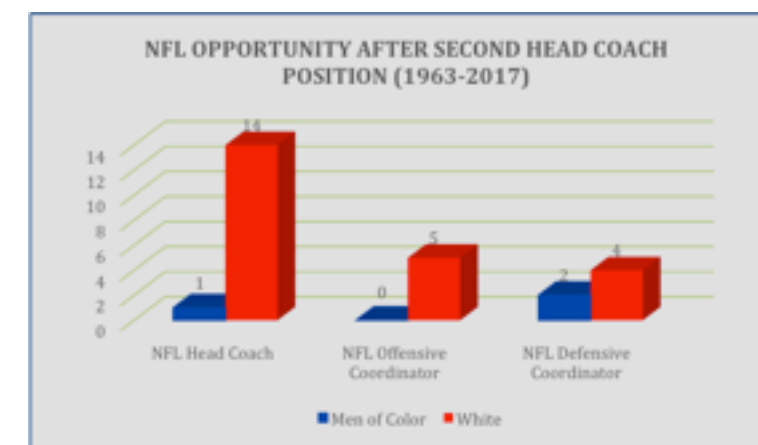
Three of the six recently hired head coaches (Lynn, McVay, and Shanahan) were most recently offensive coordinators of another NFL team. In addition, one of the recently hired head coaches (Marrone) was most recently the assistant head coach / offensive line coach of the same team to which he was named a head coach. Overall, four of the six recently hired head coaches (Lynn, Marrone, McVay, and Shanahan) have previous experience as an NFL offensive coordinator. The other two recently hired head coaches (Vance Joseph and Sean McDermott) were most recently defensive coordinators of another NFL team.

**FIGURE 1: NFL OPPORTUNITY AFTER FIRST HEAD COACH POSITION (1963-2017)**



As illustrated above in Figure 1, after separating from a first head coach position, ten different coaches of color (50 percent of the 20 total head coaches of color from 1963-2017) have received (and accepted) a second head coach opportunity in the NFL since 1963. After separating from a first head coach position, 53 White individuals have received (and accepted) a second head coach opportunity since 1963. Doug Marrone recently earned a second head coach opportunity in January 2017.

**FIGURE 2: NFL OPPORTUNITY AFTER SECOND HEAD COACH POSITION (1963-2017)**

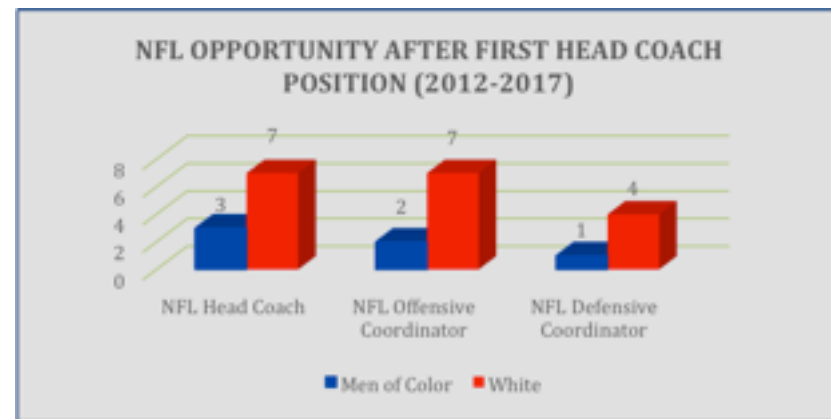


As illustrated above in Figure 2, after separating from a second head coach position, only one coach of color, Tom Flores, has received (and accepted) a third opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. Fourteen White coaches have received (and accepted) a third opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. For example, Wade Phillips has been a full-time NFL head coach for three NFL teams (Denver Broncos, Buffalo Bills and Dallas Cowboys)<sup>4</sup>. In January 2017, Phillips was named defensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Rams—this is the ninth NFL defensive coordinator opportunity for Phillips. In addition, two White coaches (Bill Parcells and Marty Schottenheimer) earned a fourth opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. Not a single person of color has earned a fourth opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team.

<sup>4</sup> Wade Phillips was also interim head coach of the New Orleans Saints (1985), Atlanta Falcons (2003), and Houston Texans (2013).

OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS,  
AND COORDINATOR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOLLOWING  
NFL HEAD COACH EXPERIENCE

FIGURE 3: NFL OPPORTUNITY AFTER FIRST HEAD COACH POSITION (2012-2017)



As illustrated above in Figure 3, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017), seven White individuals and three African American individuals received a second head coach opportunity after separating (that is, being fired, resigning or otherwise “parting ways”) from a first head coach position during this time period. John Fox and Mike Mularkey are the only two coaches who received a third NFL head coach opportunity during this same time period. In addition, one individual (Jim Harbaugh) received a head coach opportunity at the college level after separating from his first NFL head coach position, and one individual (Lovie Smith) received a head coach opportunity at the college level after separating from his second NFL head coach position.

During this same time period between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017), seven White individuals and two African American individuals received an opportunity to be an offensive coordinator after separating from a first head coach position. Also during this same time period, four White individuals and one African American individual received an opportunity to be an NFL defensive coordinator after separating from a first head coach position. In January 2017, former first time NFL head coach Mike McCoy was named new offensive coordinator of the Denver Broncos. Also in January 2017, former first time NFL head coach Gus Bradley was named new defensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Chargers.

Findings in the current research study also revealed 17 African American individuals have been head coaches in the NFL since 1963. Seven African American individuals have held interim head coach positions (i.e., these individuals were head coaches for a part of an NFL season) but were not offered the head coach position for the following full NFL season. In January 2015, Todd Bowles became the first African American leader named to a head coach position after previously serving as an interim head coach earlier in his career; Bowles served as interim head coach for three games with the Miami Dolphins during the 2011-2012 NFL season. In January 2017, Anthony Lynn became the second African American leader named to a head coach position after previously serving as an interim head coach earlier in his career; Lynn served as interim head coach for one game with the Buffalo Bills during the 2016-2017 NFL season.

In addition, only seven NFL teams have hired two different African American head coaches from 1963-2017. For example, in January 2016 Hue Jackson became the second African American head coach in the history of the Cleveland Browns; Romeo Crennel was the head coach of the Cleveland Browns from 2005-2008. Also, with the hiring of Lovie Smith in 2014, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers became the first NFL team to hire three African American head coaches (Tony Dungy, Raheem Morris and Lovie Smith). The Buccaneers fired Smith in January 2016. In addition, the Indianapolis Colts became the first (and only) NFL team to hire African American head coaches back-to-back when the Colts hired Jim Caldwell to succeed Tony Dungy in 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Based on internal NFL research data, NFL teams hired 73 head coaches during the previous eleven-year period from 2006-2016. Only eleven of these 73 head coach vacancies (15 percent) were filled by men of color.

TABLE 2: OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS (2016-2017)\*

TEAM	NAME OF FORMER OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR	RACE OF FORMER OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR	NEXT OPPORTUNITY FOR OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR	NAME OF NEW OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR	RACE OF NEW OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Atlanta Falcons	Kyle Shanahan	White	Head Coach, San Francisco 49ers	Steve Sarkisian	White
Baltimore Ravens	Marc Trestman	White	No new position as of February 5, 2017	Marty Mornhinweg	White
Buffalo Bills*	Greg Roman	White	Senior Offensive Assistant / Tight Ends Coach, Baltimore Ravens	Anthony Lynn	African American
Buffalo Bills	Anthony Lynn	African American	Head Coach, Los Angeles Chargers	Rick Dennison	White
Denver Broncos	Rick Dennison	White	Offensive Coordinator, Buffalo Bills	Mike McCoy	White
Houston Texans+	George Godsey	White	No new position as of February 5, 2017	No new offensive coordinator	Not applicable
Jacksonville Jaguars	Greg Olson	White	Quarterbacks Coach, Los Angeles Rams	Nathaniel Hackett	White
Los Angeles Rams	Rob Boras	White	Tight Ends Coach, Buffalo Bills	Matt LaFleur	White
Minnesota Vikings	Norv Turner	White	No new position as of February 5, 2017	Pat Shurmur	White
New York Jets	Chan Gailey	White	Retired	John Morton	White
Oakland Raiders	Bill Musgrave	White	Quarterbacks Coach, Denver Broncos	Geep Chryst	White
San Francisco 49ers+	Curtis Modkins	African American	Running Backs Coach, Chicago Bears	No new offensive coordinator	Not applicable
Washington Redskins	Sean McVay	White	Head Coach, Los Angeles Rams	Matt Cavanaugh	White

\* Date range for data: February 8, 2016 (day following Super Bowl 50) to February 5, 2017 (date of Super Bowl LI)

+ Note: The Buffalo Bills made two changes at the offensive coordinator position during the date range for data collection. The Bills fired Greg Roman in September 2016. Anthony Lynn was named offensive coordinator. Lynn was subsequently hired as head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers in January 2017. At the request of the NFL, offensive coordinator openings and subsequent hires for the Los Angeles Rams and San Francisco 49ers are included in this Volume VI report because each of these two offensive coordinator positions were open (but not yet filled) prior to kickoff at Super Bowl LI.

+ Note: The Houston Texans decided the team would not hire a new offensive coordinator for the 2017-2018 NFL season. Head Coach Bill O'Brien will be responsible for calling plays. Likewise, the San Francisco 49ers decided the team would not hire a new offensive coordinator for the 2017-2018 NFL season. Head Coach Kyle Shanahan will be responsible for calling plays.

**TABLE 3: DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS  
(2016-2017)\***

TEAM	NAME OF FORMER DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR	RACE OF FORMER DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR	NEXT OPPORTUNITY FOR DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR	NAME OF NEW DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR	RACE OF NEW DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR
Atlanta Falcons	Richard Smith	White	No new position as of February 5, 2017	Marquand Manuel	African American
Buffalo Bills	Dennis Thurman	African American	No new position as of February 5, 2017	Leslie Frazier	African American
Carolina Panthers	Sean McDermott	White	Head Coach, Buffalo Bills	Steve Wilks	African American
Cleveland Browns	Ray Horton	African American	No new position as of February 5, 2017	Gregg Williams	White
Denver Broncos	Wade Phillips	White	Defensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Rams	Joe Woods	African American
Houston Texans*	Romeo Crennel	African American	Assistant Head Coach—Defense, Houston Texans	Mike Vrabel	White
Los Angeles Chargers	John Pagano	White	Assistant Head Coach—Defense, Los Angeles Chargers	Gus Bradley	White
Los Angeles Rams	Gregg Williams	White	Defensive Coordinator, Cleveland Browns	Wade Phillips	White
Miami Dolphins	Vance Joseph	African American	Head Coach, Denver Broncos	Matt Burke	White
San Francisco 49ers+	Jim O'Neil	White	No new position as of February 5, 2017	Robert Saleh	Muslim American
Washington Redskins	Joe Barry	White	Assistant Head Coach / Linebackers Coach, Los Angeles Rams	Greg Manusky	White

\* Date range for data: February 8, 2016 (day following Super Bowl 50) to February 5, 2017 (date of Super Bowl LI)

\* Note: In January 2017, the Houston Texans named Romeo Crennel to the position of "assistant head coach—defense."

+ Note: At the request of the NFL, the San Francisco 49ers and Atlanta Falcons defensive coordinator openings and subsequent hires are included in this Volume VI report even though these defensive coordinator openings were not filled prior to kickoff at Super Bowl LI.

As the above Tables 2 and 3 illustrate, between February 8, 2016 (day following Super Bowl 50) and February 5, 2017 (day of Super Bowl LI), NFL teams hired ten White offensive coordinators and one offensive coordinator of color. Anthony Lynn, the one offensive coordinator of color hired during this time period (in September 2016), subsequently earned the head coach position with the Los Angeles Chargers (in January 2017). During the same approximate one year time period, NFL teams hired six White defensive coordinators and five defensive coordinators of color. Between the start of the 2012 NFL season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017), NFL teams hired 53 White offensive coordinators and seven offensive coordinators of color. During that same time period, NFL teams hired 33 White defensive coordinators and 19 defensive coordinators of color.

Three of the eleven offensive coordinators hired between the day after Super Bowl 50 (February 8, 2016) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017) are currently holding an NFL offensive coordinator position for the fourth time (Matt Cavanaugh, Rick Dennison, and Marty Mornhinweg). Pat Shurmur is now serving as an NFL offensive coordinator for the third time. Two offensive coordinators hired during this time period are serving as an NFL offensive coordinator for the second time (Nathaniel Hackett and Mike McCoy). The remaining five offensive coordinators were hired as first time NFL offensive coordinators (Todd Downing, Matt LaFleur, Anthony Lynn, John Morton, and Steve Sarkisian). Five of the eleven offensive coordinators hired between the day after Super Bowl 50 (February 8, 2016) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017) held the quarterbacks coach position with an NFL team immediately before being named offensive coordinator of their current NFL team.

Four of the eleven defensive coordinators hired between the day after Super Bowl 50 (February 8, 2016) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017) are currently holding an NFL defensive coordinator position for the third or greater time (Leslie Frazier, Greg Manusky, Wade Phillips, and Gregg Williams). In January 2017, Gus Bradley received an opportunity to work as an NFL defensive coordinator for the second time when hired by the Los Angeles Chargers. The remaining six defensive coordinators are first time NFL defensive coordinators (Matt Burke, Marquand Manuel, Mike Vrabel, Steve Wilks, Joe Woods, and Robert Saleh). All four recently hired African American defensive coordinators (Leslie Frazier, Marquand Manuel, Steve Wilks, and Joe Woods) served as defensive backs (secondary coaches) immediately before earning their current NFL defensive coordinator opportunity. Robert Saleh, a Muslim American, most recently served as an NFL linebackers coach before earning the defensive coordinator position with the San Francisco 49ers in February 2017.

As illustrated above in Figure 1 of this report, after separating from a first head coach position, 26 White individuals have held offensive coordinator positions and 25 White individuals have held defensive coordinator positions since 1963. For example, Mike McCoy was recently named offensive coordinator of the Denver Broncos after previously serving as head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers (2013-2016). In addition, Gus Bradley was recently named defensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Chargers after previously serving as head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars (2012-2016). After separating from a first head coach position, three coaches of color (Tom Fears, Jim Caldwell and Hue Jackson) have held the offensive coordinator position and two coaches of color (Romeo Crennel and Leslie Frazier) have been defensive coordinators.



GENERAL MANAGER MOBILITY PATTERNS

FIGURE 4: NFL OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS (2012-2017)



FIGURE 5: NFL DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS (2012-2017)



As illustrated above in Figure 4 and Figure 5, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017), 24 White individuals have received a second opportunity to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team. During this same time period, only three men of color received a similar “second-chance” opportunity to be an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator. In addition, during this same time period, 30 White individuals received a “third or greater chance” to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team, whereas only nine men of color received a similar “third or greater chance” to be an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator.

TABLE 4: GENERAL MANAGER MOBILITY PATTERNS (2016-2017)\*

TEAM	NAME OF FORMER GENERAL MANAGER	RACE OF FORMER GENERAL MANAGER	NEXT OPPORTUNITY FOR GENERAL MANAGER	NAME OF NEW GENERAL MANAGER	RACE OF NEW GENERAL MANAGER
Indianapolis Colts	Ryan Grigson	White	No new position as of February 5, 2017	Chris Ballard	White
San Francisco 49ers	Trent Baalke	White	No new position as of February 5, 2017	John Lynch	White

\* Date range for data: February 8, 2016 (day following Super Bowl 50) to February 5, 2017 (date of Super Bowl LI)

\* Note: The data in this study does not include individuals who hold “general manager equivalent” positions (for example, individuals who are responsible for “controlling the draft board” but do not have the job title “general manager”). For instance, in January 2017 the Jacksonville Jaguars hired Tom Coughlin as Executive Vice President of Football Operations.

As the above Table 4 illustrates, between February 8, 2016 (day following Super Bowl 50) and February 5, 2017 (day of Super Bowl LI), NFL teams hired two White general managers. During that same time period, NFL teams hired zero general managers of color. Between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017), NFL teams hired 18 new general managers. Sixteen of the 18 general managers are White individuals. Ray Farmer, who is African American, was hired as general manager of the Cleveland Browns in February 2014. In addition, Chris Grier, who is African American, was hired as general manager of the Miami Dolphins in January 2016. As of February 2017, there were six African American general managers in the NFL as compared with 25 White general managers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In January 2016, the Cleveland Browns promoted Sashi Brown, an African American executive, from general counsel executive vice president of football operations. The Browns also named former New York Mets baseball operations executive Paul DePodesta to the newly created position of Chief Strategy Officer. The Browns subsequently hired Andrew Berry, an African American individual, as the team’s new vice president of player personnel. Berry reports to DePodesta and Brown. The Browns decided not to hire a new general manager.

## NFL POSITION COACHES—THE PRIMARY PIPELINES FOR ASPIRING HEAD COACH CANDIDATES

**Quarterbacks Coaches:** As of February 2017, only two quarterbacks coaches were African American individuals (Byron Leftwich and David Culley). Leftwich and Culley were both hired as first time NFL quarterbacks coaches in January 2017. Thirteen current NFL offensive coordinators worked as an NFL quarterbacks coach immediately prior to earning the opportunity to work as an NFL offensive coordinator. The quarterbacks coach position is one of the primary occupational mobility pipelines to work as an NFL offensive coordinator. In addition, twelve current NFL quarterbacks coaches have previously worked as an NFL offensive coordinator, and one current NFL quarterbacks coach previously served as an NFL head coach.

**Running Backs Coaches:** As of February 2017, twenty-seven NFL running backs coaches were African American individuals and one running backs coach was an American Samoan individual (Kennedy Polamalu). However, zero current NFL offensive coordinators worked as an NFL running backs coach immediately prior to earning the opportunity to work as an NFL offensive coordinator. Fourteen of the 27 African American running backs coaches have held that coaching position for at least three NFL seasons; the average stint/tenure for current African American running backs coaches is 2.7 years. In addition, three of the 27 African American running backs coaches have previously worked as an NFL offensive coordinator. No current NFL running backs coach has previously worked as an NFL head coach.

**Wide Receivers Coaches:** As of February 2017, seventeen NFL wide receivers coaches were African American individuals and one wide receivers coach was a Polynesian American leader. The average stint/tenure for current wide receivers coaches of color is 1.6 years. In addition, only three current NFL offensive coordinators worked as an NFL wide receivers coach immediately prior to earning the opportunity to work as an NFL offensive coordinator. None of the 18 current wide receivers coaches of color previously served as an NFL offensive coordinator. Raheem Morris is the only current African American wide receivers coach who has previous NFL head coach experience.

**Tight Ends Coaches:** As of February 2017, five NFL tight ends coaches were African American individuals. The average stint/tenure for current African American tight ends coaches is seven years. Only one current NFL offensive coordinator worked as an NFL tight ends coach immediately prior to earning the opportunity to work as an NFL offensive coordinator. In addition, none of the five current African American tight ends coaches previously served as an NFL offensive coordinator, as compared with six of the current White tight ends coaches who have previously worked as an NFL offensive coordinator.

**Offensive Line Coaches:** As of February 2017, two NFL offensive line coaches were African American individuals. The average stint/tenure for current African American offensive line coaches is four years. Only one current NFL offensive coordinator worked as an NFL offensive line coach immediately prior to earning the opportunity to work as an NFL offensive coordinator. In addition, neither of the two current African American offensive line coaches previously served as an NFL offensive coordinator, as compared with seven of the current White offensive line coaches who have previously worked as an NFL offensive coordinator<sup>7</sup>.

**Defensive Line Coaches:** As of February 2017, seventeen NFL defensive line coaches were African American individuals. The average stint/tenure for current African American defensive line coaches is 3.5 years. Three current NFL defensive coordinators (two White defensive coordinators and one African American defensive coordinator) worked as an NFL defensive line coach immediately prior to earning an opportunity to work as an NFL defensive coordinator. In addition, none of the 17 current African American defensive line coaches have previously held an NFL defensive coordinator position.

**Linebackers Coaches:** As of February 2017, seven NFL linebackers coaches were African American individuals. The average stint/tenure for current African American linebackers coaches is two years. Eleven current NFL defensive coordinators (eight White defensive coordinators, two African American defensive coordinators, and one Muslim American defensive coordinator) worked as an NFL linebackers coach immediately prior to earning the opportunity to work as an NFL defensive coordinator. In addition, nine current White linebackers coaches have previously worked as an NFL defensive coordinator, as compared with one African American linebackers coach (Frank Bush) who has previously worked as an NFL defensive coordinator.

**Defensive Backs Coaches:** As of February 2017, twenty-one NFL defensive backs (secondary) coaches were African American individuals. The average stint/tenure for current African American defensive backs (secondary) coaches is 2.3 years. Nine current NFL defensive coordinators (three White defensive coordinators and six African American defensive coordinators) worked as an NFL defensive backs (secondary) coach immediately prior to earning the opportunity to work as an NFL defensive coordinator. The above data indicate linebackers and defensive backs (secondary) coach positions function as two primary occupational mobility pipelines to work as an NFL defensive coordinator.

## ADDITIONAL KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Recent research by the NFL found that first time NFL coaches hired during the eleven-year period between 2006-2016 who had less than five years of coordinator experience succeeded at a rate of 19 percent (that is, six of the 31 coaches had a career coaching record above .500 or coached in the playoffs more than once). This NFL research study also found that first time NFL coaches hired between 2006-2016 who had five or more years of coordinator experience succeeded at a rate of 73 percent (that is, 11 of the 15 coaches had a career coaching record above .500 or coached in the playoffs more than once).

Three of the four first time coaches hired in January 2016 had three years or less of coordinator experience (Adam Gase, Ben McAdoo and Doug Pederson). Dirk Koetter had nine years of previous NFL coordinator experience before becoming the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The combined winning percentage during the 2016-2017 NFL regular season for the teams coached by Gase, McAdoo and Pederson was 58.3 percent. Gase and McAdoo coached their respective teams to the NFL playoffs. The initial coaching success of Gase and McAdoo is an encouraging sign for the ability of first time head coaches without extensive previous NFL coordinator experience to lead an NFL team. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers, coached by Koetter, finished the 2016-2017 NFL regular season with a 9-7 record; however the Buccaneers did not make the playoffs. Koetter's relative initial success as a first time head coach also underscores the importance and impact of extensive previous NFL coordinator experience.

Five of the six most recently hired head coaches are first time NFL head coaches. Also, three of the five recently hired first time coaches have three years or less of coordinator experience (Joseph, Lynn, and McVay). Shanahan and McDermott each have at least eight years of previous NFL coordinator experience. Based on the recent NFL research discussed above, Shanahan and McDermott are better prepared and positioned to succeed as first time NFL head coaches as compared with Joseph, Lynn, and McVay as a result of Shanahan's and McDermott's extensive prior experience as NFL coordinators.

Recent research by the NFL also found that, during the eleven-year period between 2006-2016, second time head coaches who had winning records during their first stint as an NFL head coach succeeded at a rate of 45 percent. Conversely, second time head coaches who had losing records during their first stint as an NFL head coach only succeeded at a rate of 33 percent.

Two of the seven head coaches hired during or shortly after the 2015-2016 NFL regular season were second time NFL head coaches. Before becoming head coach of the Cleveland Browns in January 2016, Hue Jackson previously coached the Oakland Raiders to an 8-8 record during the 2011 NFL regular season. Likewise, before becoming head coach of the San Francisco 49ers in January 2016, Chip Kelly served as head coach of the Philadelphia Eagles from 2013-2015 and coached the team to a combined record of 26-21 during his three years as head coach. During the 2016-2017 NFL regular season, Jackson coached the Browns to a 1-15 record and Kelly coached the 49ers to a 2-14 record. One of the six most recently hired head coaches is a second time NFL head coach. Doug Marrone, recently hired by the Jacksonville Jaguars, previously coached the Buffalo Bills to a combined 15-17 record during the 2013-2014 NFL regular seasons. The recent NFL research discussed above forecasts a 33 percent success rate for Marrone in his leadership role as new head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars.xx

<sup>7</sup> Harold Goodwin, current offensive coordinator of the Arizona Cardinals, is also responsible for coaching the offensive line.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### ***“The Reshuffling Effect”—Limiting the Talent Pipeline***

Findings in the current research study revealed 20 out of the 35 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously an offensive coordinator in the NFL before earning a head coach opportunity. Eleven of the 35 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously a defensive coordinator in the NFL before earning a head coach opportunity. These findings indicate that the offensive coordinator position is historically (but not always) the primary pipeline for aspiring first time NFL head coaches, whereas defensive coordinator can be viewed as the next most viable pipeline for prospective first time NFL head coaches<sup>8</sup>. Rider et al. (2016) studied head coach changes from 1985-2012 and found that approximately 70 percent of all head coach promotions involved coaches who were promoted from a coordinator position.

For example, six out of the seven head coaches hired between February 2, 2014 and February 1, 2015 had defensive coaching backgrounds (Bowles, Del Rio, Fox, Quinn, Tomsula and Ryan) as compared with only one coach with an offensive coaching background (Kubiak). Conversely, all seven head coaches hired between February 2, 2015 and kickoff at Super Bowl 50 (February 7, 2016) had offensive coaching backgrounds; six of these seven head coaches had previous experience as an NFL offensive coordinator, and five of these seven head coaches were NFL offensive coordinators immediately prior to earning their current head coach opportunity.

The current Volume VI report extends this data set on the impact and importance of NFL coordinator experience. All six head coaches hired during the approximate one-year period from the day following Super Bowl 50 (February 8, 2016) to kickoff at Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017) have prior NFL coordinator experience. Four of the six recently hired head coaches have previous experience as NFL offensive coordinators; three of these four head coaches were NFL offensive coordinators immediately prior to earning their current head coach opportunity. The remaining two recently hired head coaches were NFL defensive coordinators immediately prior to earning their current head coach opportunity. Vance Joseph (former defensive coordinator of the Miami Dolphins) and Anthony Lynn (former offensive coordinator of the Buffalo Bills) were each recently named NFL head coaches after serving in an NFL coordinator position for all or part of one NFL season; this finding reiterates the importance of men of color earning an opportunity to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator, as these two leadership positions function as viable springboards to NFL head coach opportunities.

Findings in this research study reveal a “reshuffling effect” in which recently separated (i.e., fired, resigned or otherwise parted ways) head coaches, offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators immediately received a new coaching opportunity in a key “head coach pipeline position” such as quarterbacks coach, linebackers coach and defensive backs (secondary) coach. For example, two of the thirteen recently separated offensive coordinators subsequently received an opportunity to be the quarterbacks coach of an NFL team. In addition, five of the eleven recently hired offensive coordinators were most recently an NFL quarterbacks coach before being named to their current offensive coordinator position; four of these five former quarterbacks coaches received an internal promotion to offensive coordinator of the same team. Overall, seven of the eleven recently hired offensive coordinators have prior quarterbacks coach experience at the NFL level.

On the defensive side, six of the eleven recently hired defensive coordinators have prior experience as a linebackers coach in the NFL. Four recently hired defensive coordinators have prior experience as a defensive backs (secondary) coach in the NFL. Several of the recently separated defensive coordinators immediately received a new coaching opportunity in a key “head coach pipeline position.” For example, three of the recently separated defensive coordinators subsequently received an opportunity to be the “assistant head coach” of an NFL team, and another two of the recently separated defensive coordinators made a lateral career move with respect to being named a defensive coordinator of a different team.

<sup>8</sup> Recent research by the NFL similarly indicated 20 out of 73 (27 percent) NFL head coaches hired during the eleven-year period from 2006-2016 were former NFL offensive coordinators whereas 15 of the 73 (21 percent) of the head coaches hired during this same time period were former NFL defensive coordinators.

Several of the recently separated NFL head coaches subsequently received a new coaching opportunity in a key pipeline position. For example, Gus Bradley was named defensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Chargers and Mike McCoy was named offensive coordinator of the Denver Broncos.

Recent research by the NFL revealed 23 out of 73 (32 percent) NFL head coaches hired during the eleven-year period from 2006-2016 were former NFL head coaches. Four of these 23 “second or greater opportunity” head coaches hired during this eleven-year period were men of color. These findings demonstrate that in order to be hired as a head coach in the NFL oftentimes the perceived most valuable career background is previous experience as an NFL head coach. These findings demonstrate another instance of the reshuffling effect with respect to limiting the overall number of opportunities for prospective first time NFL head coaches.

Findings in this Volume VI research report also indicate a prevalence of the reshuffling effect with respect to the same individuals repeatedly hired for NFL team coordinator positions, which prevents new talent from entering key head coach pipelines. For example, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017), 54 White individuals have received at least a second opportunity to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team. Only twelve men of color have received a similar “second or greater” opportunity during the same time period; nine of the twelve “second or greater chances” have been for men of color hired as defensive coordinators. Twenty-four White individuals have received a second opportunity to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017). During this same time period, only three men of color received a similar “second-chance” opportunity to be an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator. During this same time period, 30 White individuals received a “third or greater chance” to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team, whereas only nine men of color received a similar “third or greater chance” to be an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator. While it is somewhat encouraging that 37 percent (19 out of 52) of the defensive coordinators hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season are coordinators of color, only 12 percent (7 out of 60) of the offensive coordinators hired during this same time period have been coordinators of color.

### ***Social Capital and Implicit Bias—The Importance of Trust and Perceived Competence***

In addition to increasing the number of qualified candidates of color who interview for each open coordinator, head coach and general manager position, it is imperative to ensure that these qualified candidates are perceived as qualified by the individuals who make the hiring decisions. A qualified candidate’s job prospects will be impacted by intangible factors such as trust and perceived competence in addition to tangible factors such as actual performance in past coaching or coordinator position(s). The findings in the current study reiterate the need to develop and implement bias-lessening processes and procedures with respect to the hiring process for head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers. The findings in the current study underscore and uncover the complexity of organizational nuances that may influence the final hiring decisions and determine the opportunities for coaches of color, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers to maneuver the hierarchies of leadership positions.

For example, the hiring of new general manager John Lynch by the San Francisco 49ers underscores the importance and impact of social capital. As mentioned above in this report, Lynch had no prior NFL personnel and front office management experience before recently being named general manager. Several weeks before the team named Lynch as general manager, San Francisco 49ers CEO Jed York commented “We need to make sure that the head coach and the general manager know each other, have a good understanding for each other.” Mike Shanahan, father of new San Francisco 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan, coached John Lynch when Lynch was a defensive back with the Denver Broncos from 2004-2007.

The findings of the current study support the power of social capital, as ten out of the twenty total head coaches of color from 1963-2017 have had a second opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. The key is to develop strategies and implement practices and processes that provide more candidates of color with a realistic opportunity to be a head coach in the NFL. As explained by scholars such as Kilduff et al. (2016), Day and McDonald (2010), and Sagas and Cunningham (2005), it is imperative to create a systemic approach that facilitates both strong and weak networking ties amongst leadership candidates of color in addition to increasing opportunities for rising industry stars to develop meaningful connections with “higher status” African American and White leaders within NFL teams and at the NFL league office. As explained by Kay et al. (2009), NFL leadership candidates of color “will have to do more than simply overcome the obstacles inherent in how the current social system is structured; they will also have to alter how people think it should be structured” (p. 421-22).

The Rooney Rule may enable a person of color to have an opportunity to secure that initial head coach position, but intangible factors such as trust and perceived competence may have even more of an impact on future occupational mobility (second and third coaching or coordinator opportunities). Rider et al. (2016) expounded, “A decade after the Rooney Rule’s implementation, within-job racial disparity clearly persists” (p. 40). Therefore, in addition to working to increase the number of people of color who make hiring decisions (team owners and general managers), it is imperative to work on improving “the perception of competence” of sport business professionals of color (Shropshire, 1996, p. 129-30). Stated differently, even if there is an increase in general managers of color and team owners, negative race consciousness associated with the coaching and coordinating capabilities of candidates of color may still exist and persist (see Shropshire, 1996).

For instance, Day (2015) applied the particularistic mobility thesis to examine race-based occupational mobility differences that result from “subjective aspects of work, such as upper level managers’ (mis) perceptions, stereotypes, and biased evaluations of workers’ managerial abilities” (p. 25). Day concluded that, “if coaches are hired into executive positions based on their perceived intangible traits (for example, loyalty, leadership abilities, and work effort), in addition to their real or perceived professional experience and technical expertise, the particularistic manipulation of these traits and skills will likely lead to more numerous and less constricted promotion opportunities for White coaches than for Black coaches” (p. 25).

#### ***Occupational Mobility and Job Tenure—Change as the Consistent Constant***

This research study also analyzed the tenure/stint (i.e., length of time in current positions) of all current NFL head coaches, offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators. For current NFL offensive coordinators, the average length of time is 1.7 years in the current position. Twenty-five current NFL offensive coordinators have been in their current position for two NFL seasons or fewer. Only six NFL offensive coordinators have been in their current position for three or more NFL seasons (Darrell Bevell, Pete Carmichael, Harold Goodwin, Todd Haley, Josh McDaniels and Mike Shula). The data is very similar for defensive coordinators; the average length of time is 1.7 years in the current position. Twenty-eight current NFL defensive coordinators have been in their current position for three NFL seasons or fewer. Only four NFL defensive coordinators have been in their current position for four or more NFL seasons (Dom Capers, Matt Patricia, Dean Pees and Bob Sutton).

As of kickoff at Super Bowl LI (February 5, 2017), three African American men held an offensive coordinator position with an NFL team. The average tenure/stint in the current position for these four individuals is 2.3 years. Terry Robiskie has one NFL season of experience in his current offensive coordinator positions with the Tennessee Titans. Edgar Bennett has two NFL seasons of experience in his current offensive coordinator position with the Green Bay Packers. Harold Goodwin has four NFL seasons of experience in his current offensive coordinator position with the Arizona Cardinals. The Titans, Packers and Cardinals—teams led by one of the three current African American offensive coordinators—had a combined record of 26-21-1 during the 2016-2017 NFL regular season.

The average tenure/stint in the current position for the ten current men of color in defensive coordinator positions is 1.2 years. Each of the ten current NFL defensive coordinators of color has three or fewer NFL seasons of experience in his current defensive coordinator position. The Falcons, Bills, Panthers, Broncos, and 49ers—five NFL teams who recently hired defensive coordinators of color in January/February 2017—had a combined record of 35-45 during the most recently completed 2016-2017 NFL regular season. The combined win/loss record for teams coached by one of the other five current African American defensive coordinators was 44-35-1 during the 2016-2017 NFL regular season.

The average coach tenure/stint for the eight men of color currently in NFL head coach positions is 4.5 years. Hue Jackson was named head coach of the Cleveland Browns in January 2016. Todd Bowles now has two NFL seasons of experience coaching the New York Jets. Jim Caldwell has been head coach of the Detroit Lions for three seasons. Ron Rivera has been head coach of the Carolina Panthers for six seasons. Mike Tomlin has been coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers for ten seasons. And, Marvin Lewis has been head coach of the Cincinnati Bengals for 14 seasons. Hue Jackson was named head coach of a team, the Cleveland Browns,

which struggled to a 3-13 record during the 2015 NFL regular season. The Browns finished the 2016-2017 NFL regular season with a 1-15 record. The combined win/loss record for teams coached by one of the other five current head coaches of color was 37-42-1 during the 2016-2017 NFL regular season.

#### ***Sorting, Stacking & Performance-Reward Bias—Access Barriers to Leadership Positions***

The above data indicate that coaches of color are often “sorted” and “stacked” into position coach roles such as running backs coaches, wide receivers coaches and defensive line coaches with minimal likelihood of ever earning an opportunity to work as an offensive or defensive coordinator of an NFL team; NFL coordinator experience is essential with respect to NFL head coach prospects. The defensive backs (secondary) coach position presently functions as one of the more viable occupational mobility paths for coaches of color in the NFL.

Rider et al. (2016) hypothesized that “stacking” and “sorting” allocative mechanisms directly impact the occupational mobility of people of color and create racial disparities in leadership. As explained by Rider et al. (2016), the “entry point ‘sorting’ mechanism suggests that racial minorities are initially allocated at hiring to positions with lesser upward mobility prospects than are white employees. The post-entry ‘stacking’ mechanism implies that racial minorities are allocated to such marginalized positions after hiring” (p. 9). Race-based sorting at the time of hire implies that “racial minorities’ first jobs will typically be in positions associated with lesser chances of attaining a leadership position (i.e., leadership prospects)” (Rider et al., 2016, p. 11).

Post-hire stacking in inferior positions “produce[s] racial disparity in organizational leadership by allocating minorities to positions that are peripheral to the organization’s central mission and consequently do not provide position-holders with opportunities to develop the skills or visibility necessary for career advancement... racial minorities will typically hold positions associated with lesser chances of attaining a leadership position” (Rider et al., 2016, pp. 11, 12). Rider et al. (2016) found that “performance-reward bias strongly influences promotions to coordinator positions but does not influence promotions to head coaching positions” (p. 37). In other words, a primary occupational mobility access barrier for coaches of color exists at the coordinator level. For example, the vast majority of African American offensive position coaches oversee running backs or wide receivers whereas only two African American coaches currently hold the quarterbacks coach position (i.e., a primary pipeline to become an offensive coordinator).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NFL AND NCAA PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Professor Claire McCarty Kilian and colleagues (2005) examined the research literature on corporate leadership diversity initiatives and found “interventions that have been successful in removing barriers to the success of women and people of color in corporate environments have not been afforded the same attention as the barriers themselves” (p. 155). Similar to the empirical research of McCarty Kilian et al., this research report “goes beyond the barriers to focus on successful interventions” (p. 155). The following recommendations are based in part on existing empirical research that examines solutions to access barriers for ethnic minorities.

It is essential to continue the development of more informal while simultaneously formal settings for ethnic minorities to connect with decision makers in the NFL with respect to head coach, offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator, general manager and other executive leadership roles.

There must continue to be a business case for diversity and inclusion when it relates to the NFL expanding the candidate pipeline and pool of applicants for head coach, offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator, general manager and other senior executive roles at both the team and league levels. The research literature highlights that a business case for diversity is one of the best ways to position inclusion strategies for organizations seeking meaningful change and innovation.

There must continue to be more innovative and nuanced diversity and inclusion metrics that spotlight and make the hiring practices in the NFL even more transparent and informative.

There must be a celebration of the “wins of diversity and inclusion” within the NFL. These victories of success should be branded so that these stories educate all stakeholders in a synergistic way so that everyone sees the value of diversity and inclusion goals, objectives and outcomes. A recent example took place during the 2017 Black History Month on NFL Network, as moments of successful nostalgia were captured both on the field and in leadership roles. Success stories were highlighted that included features of Willie Thrower becoming the first African American quarterback in the NFL, Doug Williams becoming the first African American quarterback to win a Super Bowl, Art Shell as the first African American head coach since Fritz Pollard, and Tony Dungy winning the Super Bowl against his prodigy Lovie Smith. Other ethnic minority group achievements should be celebrated with these types of visual representations.

In addition, while three African American men currently serve as NFL offensive coordinators (Edgar Bennett, Harold Goodwin and Terry Robiskie), only one of these three coordinators (Robiskie) has offensive play calling responsibilities. The head coaches of the Green Bay Packers (Mike McCarthy) and Arizona Cardinals (Bruce Arians) have retained offensive play calling responsibilities. However, in June 2016 Arians empowered Harold Goodwin by providing Goodwin with the opportunity to manage the postseason play breakdown, preseason play installation, preseason practice scripts and calling plays to the quarterback during all preseason practices. NFL head coaches, offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators are encouraged to develop similar strategic play calling opportunities during the preseason so that individuals like Harold Goodwin are able to refine and broaden the aspiring head coach candidate skill set in key areas such as play calling mechanics, play cadence/pace, and managing specific game situations. NFL Player Engagement is also encouraged to develop “Coaching Development Clinics” for current and former NFL players; these clinics would focus on providing clinic participants with tangible, transferrable skill sets related to game strategy/management, play calling logistics and analyzing game film. The Coaching Development Clinics could take place during the week preceding the Pro Bowl or Super Bowl. An online component to these clinics would provide current and former players with ongoing access to career development modules and resources as well a mechanism to evaluate “coaching readiness.” The Coaching Development Clinics would also provide relevant information on the industry work experience and substantive skill sets required for head coach, coordinator and position coach opportunities within the NFL. Current and former players that successfully complete all modules and other requirements of the Coaching Development Clinics would receive an official accreditation from the NFL, which would function as another incremental positive differentiator during the interview process.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research study relied on data provided by the NFL along with publicly available data as reported by NFL teams. Researchers did not have access to NFL team notes and records from job candidate interviews, which would have provided more extensive insight with respect to the hiring decision-making process. In addition, this research study did not track the entire career trajectory of each individual coach, coordinator and general manager examined in the study. The following recommendations for future research are made based on the findings in this research study.

Future research should examine recent occupational mobility patterns of head coaches, offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) athletics programs to determine if similar occupational access barriers exist at the collegiate level. Research in this area should also analyze the number of NFL head coaches, coordinators and position coaches that have prior coaching experience at an FBS football program. This data could provide tremendous insight on the importance and value of aspiring NFL coaches gaining extensive experience at the collegiate level.

In addition, future research should further investigate the nuances of the overall hiring process for general managers to better understand the factors, power dynamics and other variables that influence the process. For example, it appears that new Atlanta Falcons head coach Kyle Shanahan was involved with the decision to hire new general manager John Lynch. Historically in the NFL, team owners and general managers have been responsible for hiring head coaches.

Future research should also examine the nuances of career mobility and interview “timing” strategies. Data on the career experience (and social capital) of each person of color that interviews for head coach, coordinator and general manager positions would provide insight on the perceived requisite prior experience essential for these leadership positions. This information would in turn assist aspiring head coaches of color to better understand when their “career body of work” might be viewed as most competitive for open positions.

Future research should also examine the occupational mobility impact and influence of key coaching staff leadership positions such as “associate head coach—offense” and “assistant head coach—defense.” For example, in January 2017 the Houston Texans promoted defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel to the newly created position of “assistant head coach—defense.” Similarly, in January 2017 the Oakland Raiders hired John Pagano (former Los Angeles Chargers defensive coordinator) as the team’s new assistant head coach—defense, and the Los Angeles Rams hired Joe Barry (former Washington defensive coordinator) as assistant head coach / linebackers coach. In addition, in February 2017 the Kansas City Chiefs promoted co-offensive coordinator Brad Childress to the newly created position of “assistant head coach.”

Future research should also analyze the occupational mobility patterns of individuals who hold coaching positions such as “special teams assistant,” “assistant running backs coach” or “assistant linebackers coach” to determine the impact of social capital and other applied theoretical constructs on the career prospects of these position coaches.

Finally, future research should analyze the potential career development impact of football television analyst/commentator positions (and other media-related positions). For example, in January 2017 current ESPN NFL analyst Louis Riddick interviewed to be the general manager of the San Francisco 49ers. After serving as a scout and director of pro personnel with two NFL teams from 2001-2013, Riddick transitioned to working as a football analyst with ESPN.

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## BIOS OF RESEARCH TEAM & AUTHORS OF REPORT

**Dr. C. Keith Harrison** is an Associate Professor at UCF as well as Associate Chair of the DeVos Sport Business Management Graduate Program and founding director (2006-2014) of the Sport Business Management Undergraduate Program at UCF. In addition to his role as Faculty and Innovative Curriculum Coordinator of the Sport Business Management Programs, Dr. Harrison also served as Interim and Acting DeVos Chair in the College of Business during the Fall 2014 semester. As Senior Faculty/Associate Chair of the DeVos Graduate Sport Business Management Program, Dr. Harrison has contributed in the area of academic innovation and scholarship over the last decade to one of the most prestigious graduate sport business management programs. Dr. Harrison has taught leadership, diversity and sport marketing at the graduate level, and currently teaches diversity as well as co-teaches with Reggie Saunders (Director of Global Marketing, Jordan Brand) innovation and entrepreneurship in sport and entertainment at the undergraduate level. Dr. Harrison also served as an Adjunct Associate Professor at Emory University's Goizueta Business School from 2013-2015. Dr. Harrison has over two decades of university research, teaching and service experience at the community college level (Cerritos, Fullerton and Cypress) and university level (Washington State University, Indiana University, University of Michigan, Arizona State University, and UCF). A former NCAA scholar-athlete that was a center on the football team and graduated from West Texas A&M University, Harrison went on to earn his graduate degrees at California State University (Dominguez Hills) and the University of Southern California. Dr. Harrison has numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters that all disseminated from the Paul Robeson Research Center for Academic and Athletic Prowess established in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan (1998). Dr. Harrison was Co-Editor of the *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics* (2009-2011) housed at the University of North Carolina (Chapel-Hill). He is currently Editor of the *Journal of Higher Education Athletics & Innovation* housed at Oklahoma University. He also wrote and co-edited a book with Scott Bukstein on *Sport Business Analytics* published by Taylor & Francis (2016). Dr. Harrison's career focus is in a few areas: the identity of the student-athlete and professional athlete experience; diversity and inclusion issues related to gender and race relations in education, business, sport and entertainment; and the marketing of emerging multicultural demographics in the global environment in terms of fan engagement. Dr. Harrison's brief list of clients/partnerships past and present include the NFL, the Minnesota Vikings, Oakland Raiders, Miami Dolphins, University of Oregon, Jordan Brand, Boise State University, UCLA's School of Education, Wharton Sports Business Academy, UC-Boulder's Business of Sport Certificate Program, Florida Citrus Sports and numerous intercollegiate athletic departments through his co-founded non-profit Scholar-Baller. Since 2012, Dr. Harrison has been the principal investigator/researcher and co-author with Bukstein for the NFL's "Good Business" series in terms of diversity and inclusion initiatives within the NFL as well as on female spectators and influencers of the NFL brand. Harrison also serves as the lead educational consultant and special/senior advisor for the Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality (RISE), which is a not-for-profit organization founded by Miami Dolphins team owner Stephen Ross. Dr. Harrison and Bukstein developed and implemented a comprehensive academic curriculum focused on diversity, inclusion, respect and equality in sport along with creating marketing and branding content for RISE. Harrison is a guest columnist for the *SportsBusiness Journal* in the area of cultural innovation in sport business and entertainment management.

**Scott Bukstein** is the Director of the Undergraduate Sport Business Management Program within the College of Business Administration at the University of Central Florida. Bukstein is also the Associate Director of the DeVos Graduate Sport Business Management Program at UCF. In addition, Bukstein has served as an Adjunct Assistant Professor within the Goizueta Business School at Emory University (2013-2015) as well as an Adjunct Instructor within the College of Business at the University of South Florida (2014-present). Bukstein's research focus is on the intersection of sport and the law, collective bargaining in professional sport, business analytics in sport, the business of collegiate athletics and professional sport, the perceptions and academic performance of college student-athletes, mobility patterns and career paths of coaches and other executives, and leadership and diversity/inclusion issues in sport. Bukstein is also a licensed attorney.

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