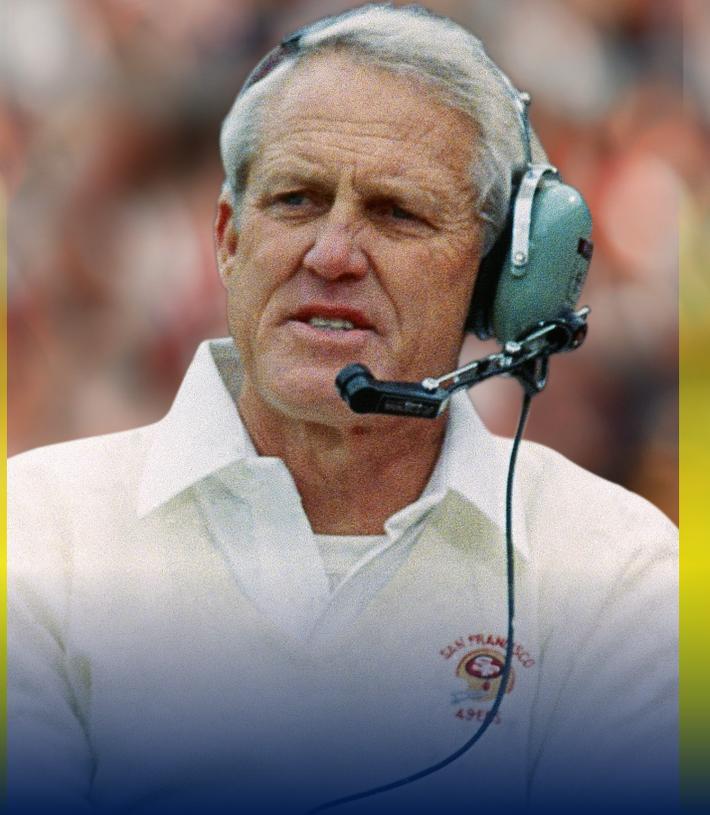




VOLUME X



**OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY PATTERNS:
An Examination of Leadership, Access, Opportunity, Social Capital
and the Reshuffling Effect within the NFL**

**Principal Investigator and Lead Researcher:
Dr. C. Keith Harrison, Professor, UCF College of Business**

A Report Presented by the National Football League

FEBRUARY 2021

"It's much broader than just head coaches for us. But head coaches are important. And we put a lot of our policies and focus on that this year. As you know, we had two minority coaches hired this year. But it wasn't what we expected, and it's not what we expect going forward. There's a lot more diversity in the coordinator position also, and across the league. But we're not satisfied. And we feel like we can do better, and we're going to."

**Roger Goodell, NFL Commissioner
(January 2021)**

"We didn't make as much progress on the head coaching side as we would have liked...But I would say we did make some progress on the general manager side, which is encouraging. And then we'll have to look on the coordinator side to see how much progress we make on that front. There are a lot of pieces to it that we're going to have to sit down when it's all said and done and really analyze what happened, and are there things we can do to strengthen the opportunities for minority coaches. I think last year we did take a number of steps that I think over time are going to pay dividends, but that's not to say we can't do more, and we'll take another strong look at it this offseason."

**Art Rooney II, Team Owner/President of Pittsburgh Steelers
(January 2021)**

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY PATTERNS IN THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

VOLUME X | FEBRUARY 2021



LEAD INVESTIGATOR AND RESEARCHER

DR. C. KEITH HARRISON

**PROFESSOR & ASSOCIATE CHAIR / CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
SPORT BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA**

RESEARCHER AND REPORT CO-AUTHOR

SCOTT BUKSTEIN

**ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTOR & DIRECTOR OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
SPORT BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA**



A REPORT PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Recommended citation for report: Harrison, C.K. and Bukstein, S. (2021). Occupational Mobility Patterns in the National Football League (Volume X).

This report is available online at <https://operations.nfl.com> and also at <http://www.coachingmobilityreport.com>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

■ INDEX OF CHARTS/GRAPHS.....	5
■ MESSAGE FROM TROY VINCENT, NFL EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF FOOTBALL OPERATIONS.....	6
■ MESSAGE FROM DR. C. KEITH HARRISON, LEAD INVESTIGATOR AND RESEARCHER.....	7
■ REPORT BACKGROUND.....	8
■ RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	9
■ FINDINGS AND RESULTS.....	10
■ DATA ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS.....	23
■ PRACTICAL PROPOSALS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS.....	35
■ BIOS OF RESEARCH TEAM & REPORT AUTHORS.....	41

INDEX OF CHARTS/GRAPHS

Figure 1: Ethnicity of General Managers, Head Coaches, Offensive Coordinators, and Defensive Coordinators Hired in 2020-2021

Figure 2: Head Coaches Hired Between 2012-2021

Figure 3: Head Coaches of Color Hired Since Start of 2012 NFL Season

Figure 4: Current Head Coach Stints (2021)

Figure 5: NFL Opportunity After First Head Coach Position (1963-2021)

Figure 6: NFL Opportunity After Second Head Coach Position (1963-2021)

Figure 7: NFL Opportunity After First Head Coach Position (2012-2021)

Figure 8: Offensive and Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2012-2021

Figure 9: Offensive Coordinator Experience For Offensive Coordinators Hired Between 2020-2021

Figure 10: Defensive Coordinator Experience For Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2020-2021

Figure 11: Offensive Coordinator Mobility Patterns (2012-2021)

Figure 12: Defensive Coordinator Mobility Patterns (2012-2021)

Figure 13: Ethnicity Of NFL General Managers Hired Between 2012-2021

Figure 14: Previous NFL Experience For Head Coaches, Offensive Coordinators, and Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2020-2021

Figure 15: Previous NFL Offensive And Defensive Coordinator Experience Before Becoming NFL Head Coach (2012-2021)

Figure 16: Ethnicity Of Current NFL Offensive And Defensive Coordinators

Figure 17: Mobility Pipeline For Current NFL Offensive Coordinators

Figure 18: Coaches Of Color In Current NFL Offensive Positional Roles (2021)

Figure 19: Previous Career Position(s) Of Current Offensive Coordinators (2012-2021)

Figure 20: Mobility Pipeline For Current NFL Defensive Coordinators

Figure 21: Coaches Of Color In Current NFL Defensive Positional Roles (2021)

Figure 22: Previous Career Position(s) Of Current Defensive Coordinators (2012-2021)

Figure 23: NFL Head Coach Mobility Patterns From 2016-2021

Figure 24: Ethnicity Of "Second Or Greater Opportunity" NFL Head Coaches Hired Between 2006-2021

Figure 25: Ethnicity Of "Second Or Greater Opportunity" NFL Offensive And Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2012-2021

Figure 26: Ethnicity Of NFL Offensive And Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2012-2021

Figure 27: NFL Offensive Coordinator Tenure In Current Position (At Start Of 2021 NFL Season)

Figure 28: NFL Defensive Coordinator Tenure In Current Position (At Start Of 2021 NFL Season)

Figure 29: NFL Tenure For Offensive Coordinators Of Color In Current Position (At Start Of 2021 NFL Season)

Figure 30: NFL Tenure For Defensive Coordinators Of Color In Current Position (At Start Of 2021 NFL Season)



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

Since the inception of the Occupational Mobility Report, there have been incremental advances in professional opportunities and growth for minorities that spark glimmers of hope. However, those tiny sparks have yet to foster a flame toward reaching the ultimate objective of a fair and open process for all.

Adherence to what the industry professes as “best practices” has yielded little results. In fact, the outcomes are in no way commensurate with the tremendous efforts invested by the well-intentioned advocates across the football universe. We can no longer rely on these best practices. In order to reach our intended goals, we must acknowledge our shortcomings and use that data and information to examine, analyze, and revitalize the entire hiring system at both the Club and League levels. It is time to develop a new strategy built upon education, league policies, club policies, and the Rooney Rule that addresses both intent and accountability.

An intentional training, awareness, and communications plan should be implemented. In addition, we must encourage a safe nonjudgmental educational environment that seeks to provide a clear understanding of the “why” behind hiring biases. These things coupled with football and C Suite personnel operating under the notion that diversity is good for business, will ultimately provide an opportunity to build the business case for diversity in hiring.

Furthermore, the Rooney Rule must be updated. Rather than relying on the Rooney Rule as the main policy for minority hiring, it must be repositioned as a tool to assist in achieving diversity and inclusion excellence. To effect change, consideration must be given to expanding current hiring practices and policies to establish consistency across the league and individual clubs. This alignment is essential and should include developing a universal diversity action plan that informs the individual club-level diversity action plans.

In parallel, we must continue to develop the talent pool and provide opportunities to cultivate relationships with decision-makers. Building interpersonal relationships and establishing trust limits the temptation of accepting moving standards that so often contribute to the color barrier. In the same vein, merit-based policies and practices need to be considered in order to discourage the system of nepotism that unduly influences the hiring cycle—family, agents, friend networks.

As we approach this new decade of occupational mobility, we must be willing to boldly determine success metrics, expand policy, provide proper incentives, and prioritize accountability. Decisions must be based on merit rather than subjectivity, and reflect a transparent, fair, and level playing field. This is the challenge of the human factor impacting the sports ecosystem and equally as important, this is business critical.

MESSAGE FROM DR. C. KEITH HARRISON, LEAD INVESTIGATOR AND RESEARCHER

Progress is a process. I remain optimistic about the diversity, equity and inclusion good business project that various stakeholders continue to pursue in the spirit of justice and equality. The 2020 NFL season saw racial and justice themes from on field contests to advertising campaigns stating the obvious but evasive concept: IT TAKES ALL OF US. On a positive note, people of color and specifically African Americans were hired as team presidents, general managers, head coaches, coordinators and as position coaches. Women (and women of color) were hired to coach, referee, lead strength and conditioning, and three African American males served as the offensive, defensive and special teams coordinators of the Super Bowl Champion team, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. I give head coach Bruce Arians major props for hiring the best person for the job who could add value and that he trusts because of their competence—not because of their skin color.

We still have work to do, though! One of the major hurdles with this occupational mobility project is what scholars refer to as attribution bias. Attribution bias refers generally to cognitive biases that reflect the systematic and systemic errors made when individuals attempt to evaluate, rationalize and justify their own decision-making as well as the decisions, competencies and behavior of others. As explained by social psychology professors David Funder, Richard Nisbett and Lee Ross, people constantly make attributions (judgements and assumptions about why people behave in certain ways); however, attributions do not always accurately reflect reality—rather than operating as objective perceivers, people are prone to perceptual errors that lead to biased interpretations of their social world.

Attribution biases are present in everyday life and continue to be a barrier specifically with the hiring of African American head coaches in the NFL. In fact, it is inconceivable to understand why coaches that are coordinators get passed over for coaches with less career experience and quite frankly less success. If the attributes related to coaching experience and success were flipped by racial skin hue, would the African American coach candidates get the benefit of the doubt, fast-tracked, and become catapulted—the data in this report and other related research indicate “no.” We have to ask the tough and most important question—why? Noted scholar/professor, Michael Eric Dyson (Vanderbilt University) developed a concept that provides us with some clues of this inequality paradigm that continues to transparently show us the outcomes of biased behavior. Dr. Dyson’s “Black Next / White Again” paradigm analyzes the prejudices, stereotypes, and in certain instances, violence that African Americans face on a daily basis. In the context of the NFL, African Americans and other human beings of color pay their dues and it when it appears to be their turn it is often a White coach hired again. And again. And again. This has also exposed a concept that I want to suggest that is also at play on the topic of race and occupational mobility: “Black Hopes / White Favors” is rampant in American sport and society. Urban Meyer attempting to hire his friend Chris Doyle is a recent example.

Even with some of these inclusion challenges, I remain hopeful as life has a way of coming full circle with diversity, equity and inclusion. Education has always been a powerful force to help America achieve its goals of social change and transformational leadership. One of those assistant coaches on the Super Bowl champion Buccaneers, Larry Foote, was my student at the University of Michigan over 20 years ago in a class entitled “Race Relations, Cultural Images, and Sport.” Foote also had a peer in that same course, Alicia Jeffries, who is currently the SVP of Marketing for the Detroit Pistons. It is rewarding to see the process of progress happening in professional sport for a former player in the NFL and a woman in the NBA that both sat in the same classroom with my instruction for a full semester on diversity, equity and inclusion. Some in this world have the outlook to be “cautiously optimistic,” which I never subscribe to. I say let’s be “strategically fearless” about the future. That’s good business.

REPORT BACKGROUND

In 1963, the National Football League (NFL) began tracking data on the occupational mobility patterns of head coaches. From January 1963 to February 2021, only 19 different African American men, four Latino men and one Lebanese American man have served as head coaches in the NFL. As of February 2021, five head coaches of color led NFL teams as compared with 27 White NFL head coaches.

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 five 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 the occupational mobility patterns of coaches and other leaders of color within the NFL?
3. What are examples of innovative practical strategies with respect to improving career opportunities for coaches and other leaders of color within the NFL, as best practice models potentially shift from a “talent pipeline” focus to a “talent pathway” emphasis?
4. How can the Rooney Rule be further revamped, revised, improved, supplemented and strengthened?
5. Should current NFL players be more actively involved in the decision-making process for new head coach hires—and, correspondingly, should NFL team owners be less involved in the hiring process for new head coaches?

Based on the findings of the current study, the NFL and teams within the league must continue to focus on retention, career progression, continued access and “life after being a head coach” in addition to the central goal of the Rooney Rule related to 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 served as a head coach in the NFL.

Since the start of the 1963 NFL season, 116 White individuals have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator after a first NFL head coach opportunity, whereas only 21 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 the start of the 1963 NFL season, 27 White individuals have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator after a second NFL head coach opportunity, whereas only four men of color have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator after a second head coach opportunity.

This research report also analyzed the hiring process for head coaches and found that the evaluative criteria utilized by decision-makers (primarily NFL team owners and general managers) seems to consistently shift each hiring cycle with respect to what prior coaching experience, leadership attributes and other non-cognitive variables are deemed essential for new head coach hires.

The remainder of this report shares data and then utilizes that data to support practical policy and hiring process related recommendations. Previous reports and policy reforms have produced gradual changes/improvements. However, deeper systemic overhauls and culture shifts are essential to produce any sustainable meaningful change in future hiring cycle results.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study examined data regarding NFL head coach demographics, tenure and occupational mobility patterns from January 1963 to February 2021. This specific range of years is utilized because 1963 serves as the first year during which 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 coach positions in the NFL from January 1963 to February 2021. 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) to kickoff at Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021)—this NFL Diversity & Inclusion research report series began analyzing data on occupational mobility patterns commencing with the start of the 2012 NFL regular season. This research 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 LIV (February 3, 2020) to kickoff at Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021). 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. For instance, findings in the current research study demonstrate that 31 out of the 62 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously an offensive coordinator in the NFL for at least one full NFL season before earning a head coach opportunity. Eighteen of the 62 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously a defensive coordinator in the NFL for at least one full NFL season before earning a head coach opportunity. 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 also 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 January 1963 to February 2021. This analytical framework was also applied to the occupational mobility patterns of offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers from January 1963 to February 2021.

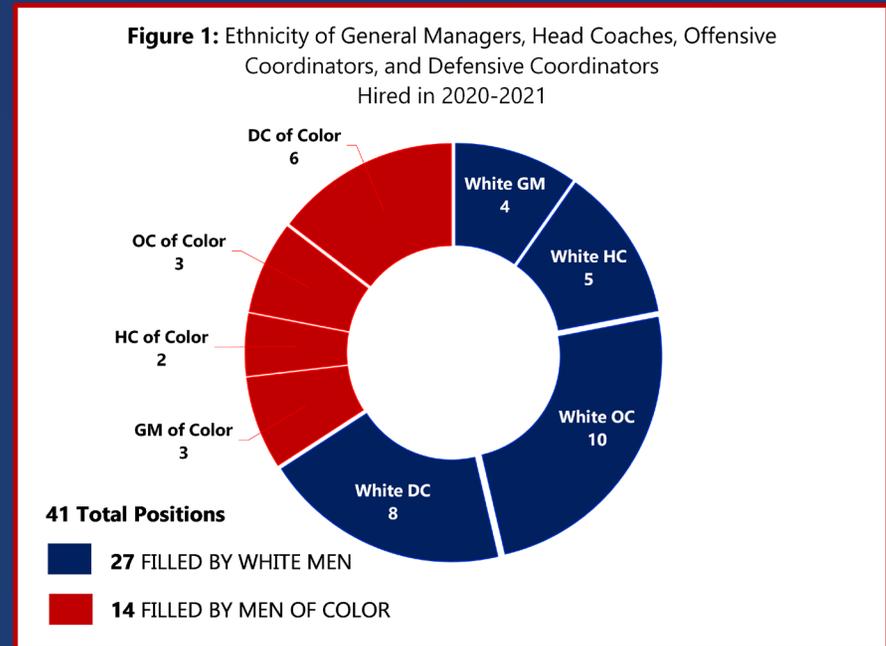
The next section of this report presents the findings and results related to an extensive descriptive analysis on the occupational mobility patterns of more than 550 current and former NFL head coaches, general managers, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and position coaches.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV), NFL teams hired a total of 41 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers for open positions. White individuals were hired for 27 of these 41 available positions. Fourteen men of color were hired for these 41 recently filled positions (see Figure 1). In other words, men of color were hired for 34% of the recently filled head coach, offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator and general manager openings—a noticeable increase from the 2019-2020 hiring cycle during which men of color were only hired for 23% of the openings (7 out of 31 positions).

In addition, between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV), four of the 37 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers who were fired, resigned, promoted, retired or otherwise “mutually parted ways” with an NFL team were men of color. Stated differently, from February 2020 to February 2021, the total number of men of color serving as head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers increased by 10 within the NFL—a marked improvement from the 2019-2020 hiring cycle during which the total number of men of color serving as head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers increased by only one.

Figure 1: Ethnicity of General Managers, Head Coaches, Offensive Coordinators and Defensive Coordinators Hired in 2020-2021



NFL teams recently hired a total of 41 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators and general managers for open positions. White individuals were hired for 27 of these 41 available positions. Fourteen men of color were hired for these 41 recently filled positions. Stated differently, men of color were hired for 34% of the recently filled head coach, offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator and general manager openings—a noticeable increase from the 2019-2020 hiring cycle during which men of color were only hired for 23% of the openings (7 out of 31 positions).

Head Coach Career Pipelines and Multiple Head Coach Opportunities

Table 1: Head Coach Mobility Patterns (2020-2021)

Team	Former Head Coach	Race of Former Head Coach	Next Opportunity for Former Head Coach	Name of New Head Coach	Race of New Head Coach	Previous Position of New Head Coach
Atlanta Falcons	Dan Quinn	White	Defensive Coordinator, Dallas Cowboys	Arthur Smith	White	Offensive Coordinator, Tennessee Titans
Detroit Lions	Matt Patricia	White	Assistant to the Head Coach, New England Patriots	Dan Campbell	White	Assistant Head Coach/ Tight Ends Coach, New Orleans Saints
Houston Texans	Bill O'Brien	White	Offensive Coordinator, University of Alabama (NCAA)	David Culley	African American	Assistant Head Coach/ Passing Game Coordinator / Wide Receivers Coach, Baltimore Ravens
Jacksonville Jaguars	Doug Marrone	White	Offensive Line Coach, University of Alabama (NCAA)	Urban Meyer	White	College Football Analyst, Fox Sports
Los Angeles Chargers	Anthony Lynn	African American	Offensive Coordinator, Detroit Lions	Brandon Staley	White	Defensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Rams
New York Jets	Adam Gase	White	[No New Position]	Robert Saleh	Lebanese American	Defensive Coordinator, San Francisco 49ers
Philadelphia Eagles	Doug Pederson	White	[No New Position]	Nick Sirianni	White	Offensive Coordinator, Indianapolis Colts

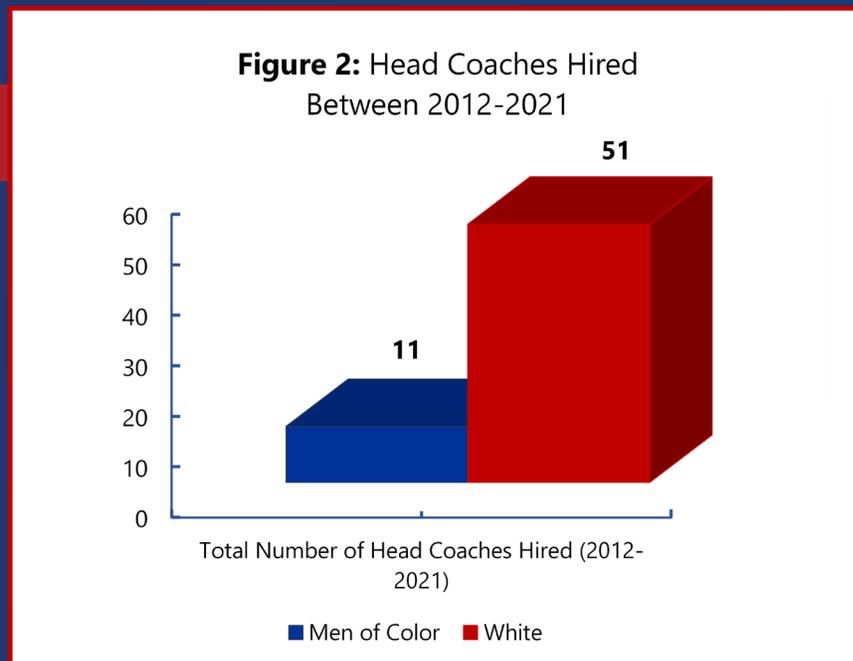
Date range for data: February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) to February 7, 2021 (date of Super Bowl LV)

As illustrated in Table 1, between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV), NFL teams hired five White head coaches. During that same time period, NFL teams hired two head coaches of color—David Culley and Robert Saleh. Culley and Saleh are both first-time NFL head coaches. In addition, between the start of the 2012 NFL season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021), NFL teams have hired 51 White head coaches—82% of head coach hires. During that same time period, NFL teams have hired only 11 head coaches of color—18% of total head coach hires (see Figure 2).

"There are many outstanding Black men and other men and women of color in the NFL. The pipeline is as strong as it has ever been. The issue is not in the sufficiency of numbers; the problem is in the limited number of leadership opportunities given."

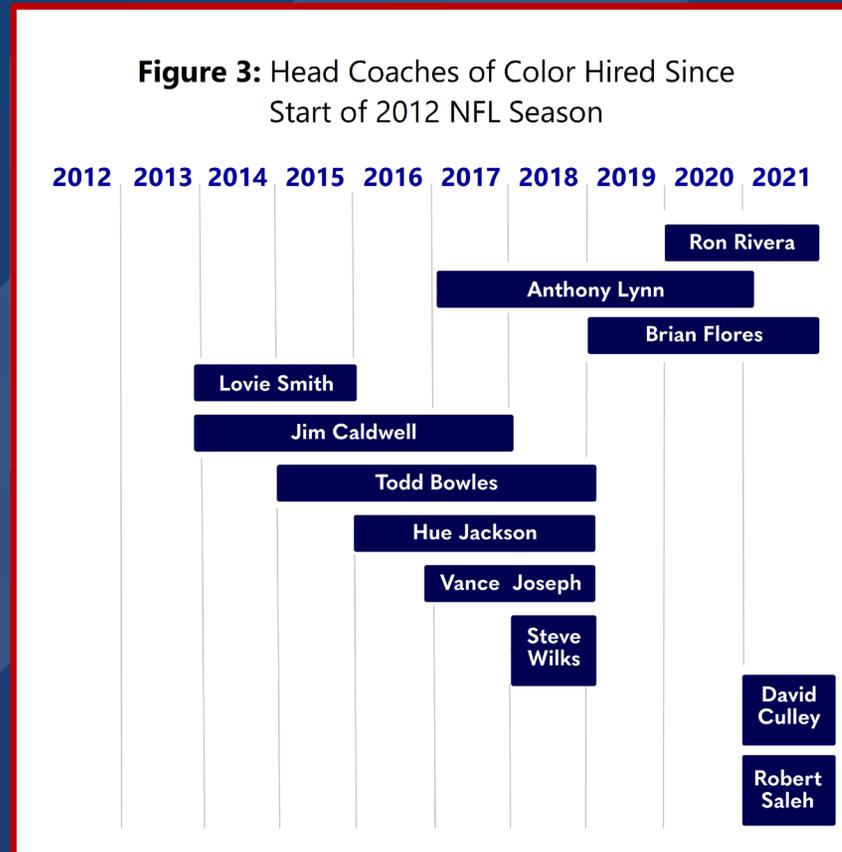
- Rod Graves, Executive Director of Fritz Pollard Alliance

Figure 2: Head Coaches of Color Hired Between 2012-2021



Notably, only four of the 11 head coaches of color hired since the start of the 2012 NFL season remain current NFL head coaches as of February 22, 2021 (Brian Flores, Ron Rivera, David Culley and Robert Saleh). For instance, Anthony Lynn served as head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers from 2017-2020. Lovie Smith served as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers during the 2014-2015 NFL seasons. Jim Caldwell served as head coach of the Detroit Lions from 2014-2017. Todd Bowles served as head coach of the New York Jets from 2015-2018. Hue Jackson served as head coach of the Cleveland Browns from 2016-2018. Vance Joseph served as head coach of the Denver Broncos from 2017-2018. Steve Wilks served as head coach of the Arizona Cardinals during the 2018 NFL season (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Head Coaches of Color Hired Since Start of 2012 NFL Season



Seven current NFL head coaches have been hired since the day following Super Bowl LIV (February 3, 2020). All seven of these new head coaches are first-time NFL head coaches. Dan Campbell served as interim head coach of the Miami Dolphins for 12 games during the 2015 NFL season.

Four of the seven recently hired head coaches have previous experience as an offensive coordinator (Arthur Smith and Nick Sirianni) or defensive coordinator (Robert Saleh and Brandon Staley) at the NFL level. Dan Campbell, David Culley and Urban Meyer did not have any prior experience as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator at the NFL level before recently being named an NFL head coach.

As of February 7, 2021, 25 of the 32 current NFL head coaches are currently serving as an NFL head coach for the first time. Five current head coaches are currently in their second stint as an NFL head coach (Mike McCarthy, Andy Reid, Bill Belichick, Bruce Arians and Ron Rivera). Two current head coaches are currently in their third stint as an NFL head coach (Pete Carroll and Jon Gruden) (see Figure 4). Seven current NFL head coaches have been in their current position for at least five prior seasons, including one head coach of color (Mike Tomlin).

Figure 4: Current Head Coach Stints (2021)

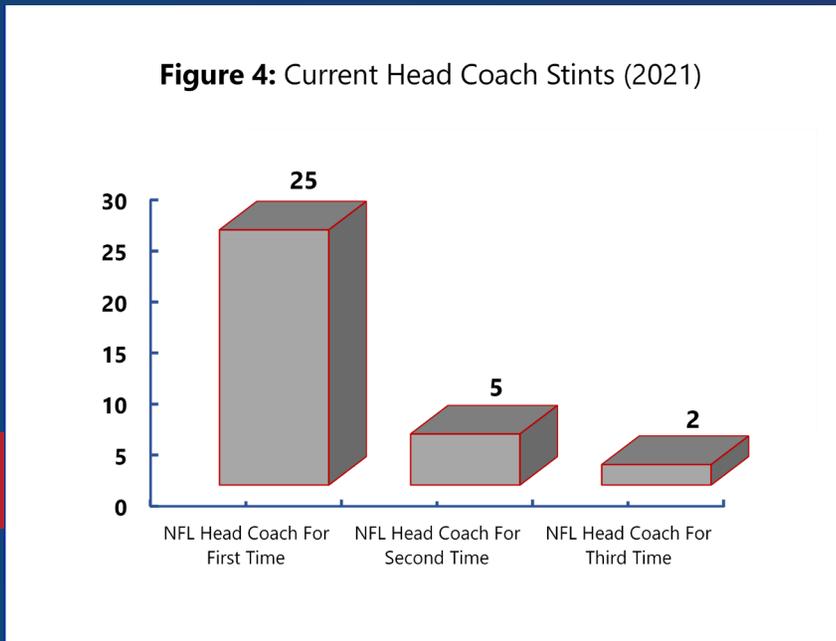
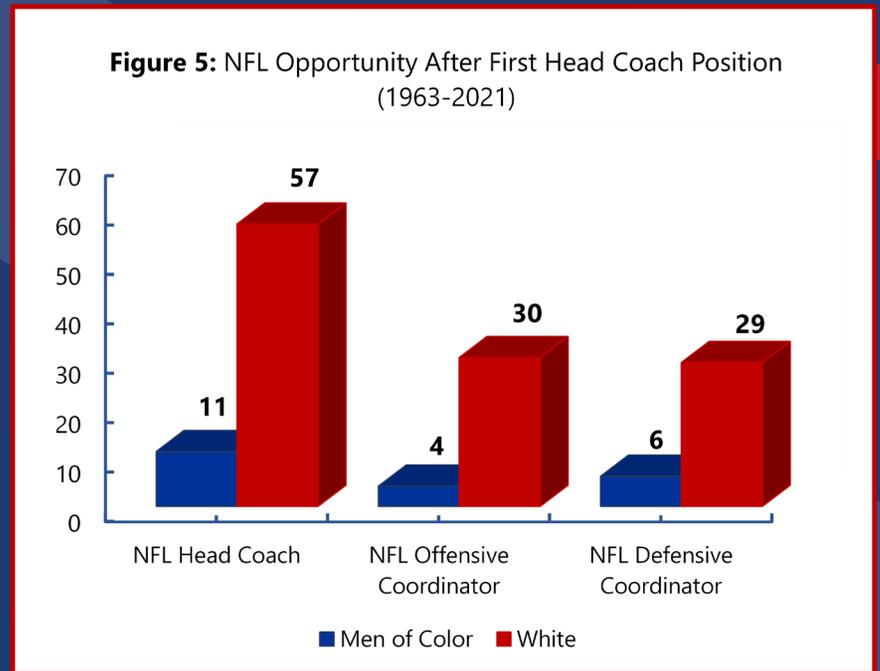


Figure 5: NFL Opportunity After First Head Coach Position (1963-2021)



As illustrated in Figure 5, after separating from a first head coach position, 11 different coaches of color—46% of the 24 total head coaches of color from 1963-2021—have received (and accepted) a second head coach opportunity in the NFL since 1963. After separating from a first head coach position, 57 White individuals have received (and accepted) a second NFL head coach opportunity since 1963.

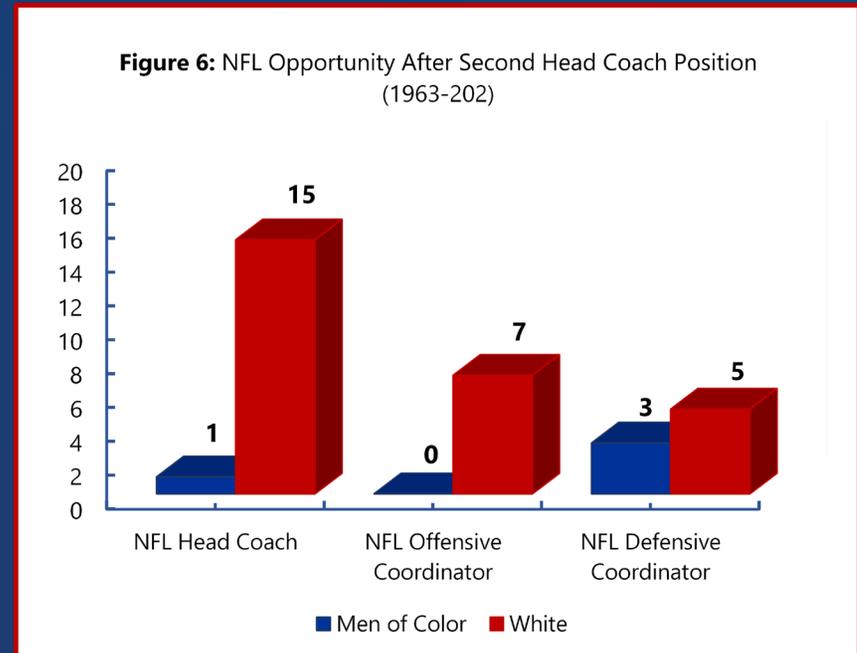
"What's really clear, at this point, is that it's not the league office. The league office has been fighting with us. It's the owners. We have ... spectacular candidates, and we still have decision-making [among owners] that's irrational."

- Cyrus Mehri, Co-Founder of the Fritz Pollard Alliance

As also illustrated in Figure 5, since 1963, after separating from a first head coach position, 30 different White individuals have held NFL offensive coordinator positions, and 29 different White individuals have held NFL defensive coordinator positions. For instance, Gus Bradley and Dan Quinn recently received NFL defensive coordinator opportunities after previously serving as head coaches in the NFL. Gus Bradley is serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the second time since coaching the Jacksonville Jaguars from 2013-2016.

Correspondingly, since 1963, after separating from a first head coach position, four former NFL head coaches of color (Tom Fears, Jim Caldwell, Hue Jackson and Anthony Lynn) have subsequently held an NFL offensive coordinator position, and six former NFL head coaches of color (Raheem Morris, Romeo Crennel, Leslie Frazier, Todd Bowles, Vance Joseph and Steve Wilks) have been subsequently hired as NFL defensive coordinators. For instance, Anthony Lynn was recently named offensive coordinator of the Detroit Lions after previously serving as an NFL head coach with the Los Angeles Chargers from 2017-2020, and Raheem Morris was recently named defensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Rams after previously serving as an NFL head coach. Raheem Morris is serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the second time since coaching the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 2009-2011.

Figure 6: NFL Opportunity After Second Head Coach Position (1963-2021)



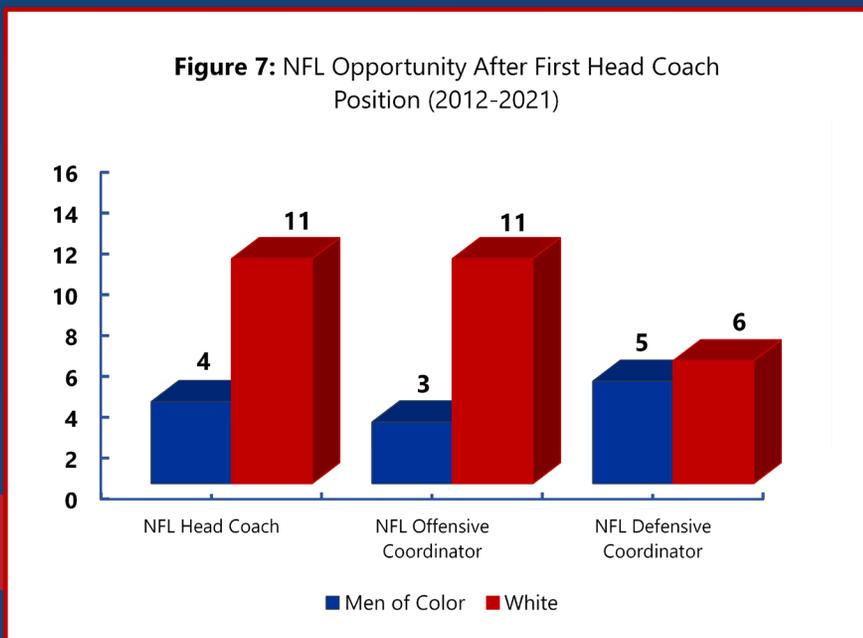
As illustrated in Figure 6, after separating from a second head coach position, only one coach of color, Tom Flores, has received (and accepted) a third opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. Fifteen White coaches have received a third opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. For example, in January 2018 Jon Gruden was named head coach of the Las Vegas Raiders. This is Gruden's second head coach stint with the Raiders and third overall head coach opportunity; Gruden previously served as head coach of the Las Vegas Raiders (1998-2001) and Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2002-2008). 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.

“Diversity hires alone are not the solution if you have a team that does not provide the environment for those diverse hires to succeed. Diverse hires shouldn’t raise expectations when they are hired only to struggling teams. It’s great to make diverse hires. Yes, let’s support that. Put them in situations where they can succeed, not fail.”

- Jodi Balsam, Brooklyn Law School Professor and Former NFL In-House Counsel

As also depicted in Figure 6, after separating from a second head coach position, seven White individuals have received the opportunity to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator (as compared with zero men of color). Figure 6 also illustrates that, after separating from a second head coach position, five White individuals have received the opportunity to serve as an NFL defensive coordinator (as compared with three men of color). Lovie Smith was recently named defensive coordinator of the Houston Texans after previously serving as head coach of both the Chicago Bears (2004-2012) and Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2014-2015).

Figure 7: NFL Opportunity After First Head Coach Position (2012-2021)



As illustrated in Figure 7, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021), 11 White individuals and four men of color received a second head coach opportunity after separating (that is, being fired or promoted, resigning, retiring or otherwise “parting ways”) from a first head coach position during this time period. John Fox, Mike Mularkey and Jon Gruden are the only three coaches who received a third NFL head coach opportunity during this same time period.

During this same time period between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021), 11 White individuals and three African American individuals received an opportunity to be an NFL offensive coordinator after separating from a first head coach position. In January 2021, former first-time NFL head coach Anthony Lynn was named offensive coordinator of the Detroit Lions after previously serving as head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers.

Also, during this same time period, six White individuals and five African American individuals received an opportunity to be an NFL defensive coordinator after separating from a first head coach position. For instance, in February 2020, former first-time NFL head coach Raheem Morris was named defensive coordinator of the Atlanta Falcons after previously working as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2009-2011); Morris made a lateral career transition to become the defensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Rams in January 2021. Similarly, in January 2021, Gus Bradley made a lateral career transition to become the defensive coordinator of the Las Vegas Raiders after most recently serving as defensive coordinator of the Los Angeles Chargers.

Findings in the current research study also revealed that 19 African American individuals have been head coaches in the NFL since 1963, including recently hired new head coach of the Houston Texans, David Culley. In addition, four different Latino Americans—including current Washington Football Team head coach Ron Rivera and current Miami Dolphins head coach Brian Flores—have served as head coaches in the NFL since 1963. In January 2021, Robert Saleh became the first Lebanese American head coach in the history of the NFL when he was named new NFL head coach of the New York Jets. Based on internal NFL research data, NFL teams hired 100 head coaches during the previous sixteen-year period from 2006-2021—only 15 of these 100 head coach vacancies were filled by men of color.

Only eight NFL teams have hired two or more African American, Latino American and/or Lebanese American head coaches from 1963-2021. For example, in January 2021, Robert Saleh became the third head coach of color hired by the New York Jets—Herm Edwards and Todd Bowles previously coached the Jets.

Offensive and Defensive Coordinator Mobility Patterns, and Coordinator Career Opportunities Following NFL Head Coach Experience

Table 2: Offensive Coordinator Mobility Patterns (2020-2021)

Team	Name of Former Offensive Coordinator	Race of Former Offensive Coordinator	Next Opportunity for Former Offensive Coordinator	Name of New Offensive Coordinator(s)	Race of New Offensive Coordinator(s)	Previous Position of New Offensive Coordinator(s)
Atlanta Falcons	Dirk Koetter	White	[Retired]	Dave Ragone	White	Passing Game Coordinator, Chicago Bears
Detroit Lions	Darrell Bevell	White	Offensive Coordinator, Jacksonville Jaguars	Anthony Lynn	African American	Head Coach, Los Angeles Chargers
Indianapolis Colts	Nick Sirianni	White	Head Coach, Philadelphia Eagles	Marcus Brady	African American	Quarterbacks Coach, Indianapolis Colts
Jacksonville Jaguars	Jay Gruden	White	[No New Position]	Darrell Bevell	White	Offensive Coordinator, Detroit Lions
Los Angeles Chargers	Shane Steichen	White	Offensive Coordinator, Philadelphia Eagles	Joe Lombardi	White	Quarterbacks Coach, New Orleans Saints
Miami Dolphins	Chan Gailey	White	[No New Position]	Eric Stutesville George Godsey	African American White	Running Backs Coach & Run Game Coordinator, Miami Dolphins Tight Ends Coach, Miami Dolphins
Minnesota Vikings	Gary Kubiak	White	[Retired]	Klint Kubiak	White	Quarterbacks Coach, Minnesota Vikings
New York Jets	Dowell Loggains	White	[No New Position]	Mike LaFleur	White	Passing Game Coordinator, San Francisco 49ers
Philadelphia Eagles	[Vacant Position]	[Not Applicable]	[Not Applicable]	Shane Steichen	White	Offensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Chargers
Pittsburgh Steelers	Randy Fichtner	White	[No New Position]	Matt Canada	White	Quarterbacks Coach, Pittsburgh Steelers
Seattle Seahawks	Brian Schottenheimer	White	Passing Game Coordinator & Quarterbacks Coach, Jacksonville Jaguars	Shane Waldron	White	Pass Game Coordinator, Los Angeles Rams
Tennessee Titans	Arthur Smith	White	Head Coach, Atlanta Falcons	Todd Downing	White	Tight Ends Coach, Tennessee Titans

Date range for data: February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) to February 7, 2021 (date of Super Bowl LV)

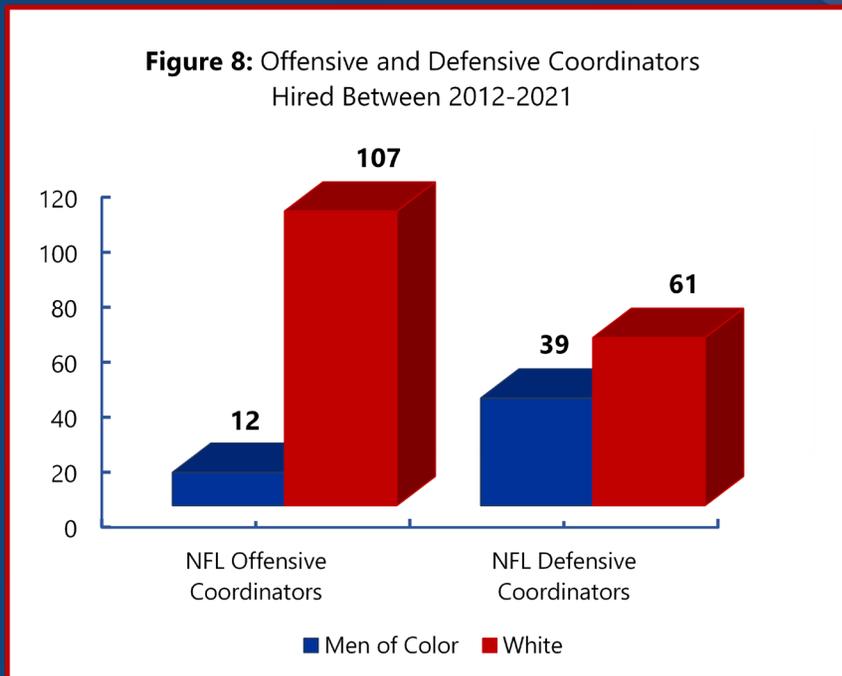
Table 3: Defensive Coordinator Mobility Patterns (2020-2021)

Team	Name of Former Defensive Coordinator	Race of Former Defensive Coordinator	Next Opportunity for Former Defensive Coordinator	Name of New Defensive Coordinator	Race of New Defensive Coordinator	Previous Position of New Defensive Coordinator
Atlanta Falcons	Raheem Morris	African American	Defensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Rams	Dean Pees	White	Defensive Coordinator, Detroit Lions (2019)
Chicago Bears	Chuck Pagano	White	[Retired]	Sean Desai	Indian American	Safeties Coach, Chicago Bears
Dallas Cowboys	Mike Nolan	White	[No New Position]	Dan Quinn	White	Head Coach, Atlanta Falcons
Detroit Lions	Cory Undlin	White	Pass Game Specialist/ Secondary Coach, San Francisco 49ers	Aaron Glenn	African American	Secondary Coach, New Orleans Saints
Green Bay Packers	Mike Pettine	White	Senior Defensive Assistant, Chicago Bears	Joe Barry	White	Assistant Head Coach/ Linebackers Coach, Los Angeles Rams
Houston Texans	Anthony Weaver	African American	Run Game Coordinator/ Defensive Line Coach, Baltimore Ravens	Lovie Smith	African American	Head Coach, University of Illinois (NCAA)
Jacksonville Jaguars	Todd Wash	White	Defensive Line Coach, Detroit Lions	Joe Cullen	White	Defensive Line Coach, Baltimore Ravens
Las Vegas Raiders	Paul Guenther	White	Senior Defensive Assistant, Minnesota Vikings	Gus Bradley	White	Defensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Chargers
Los Angeles Chargers	Gus Bradley	White	Defensive Coordinator, Las Vegas Raiders	Renaldo Hill	African American	Defensive Backs Coach, Denver Broncos
Los Angeles Rams	Brandon Staley	White	Head Coach, Los Angeles Chargers	Raheem Morris	African American	Assistant Head Coach/ Defensive Coordinator, Atlanta Falcons
New York Jets	Gregg Williams	White	[No New Position]	Jeff Ulbrich	White	Assistant Head Coach/ Linebackers Coach, Atlanta Falcons
Philadelphia Eagles	Jim Schwartz	White	[No New Position]	Jonathan Gannon	White	Defensive Backs/ Quarterbacks Coach, Indianapolis Colts
San Francisco 49ers	Robert Saleh	Lebanese American	Head Coach, New York Jets	DeMeco Ryans	African American	Inside Linebackers Coach, San Francisco 49ers
Tennessee Titans	[Vacant Position]	[Not Applicable]	[Not Applicable]	Shane Bowen	White	Outside Linebackers Coach, Tennessee Titans

Date range for data: February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) to February 7, 2021 (date of Super Bowl LV)

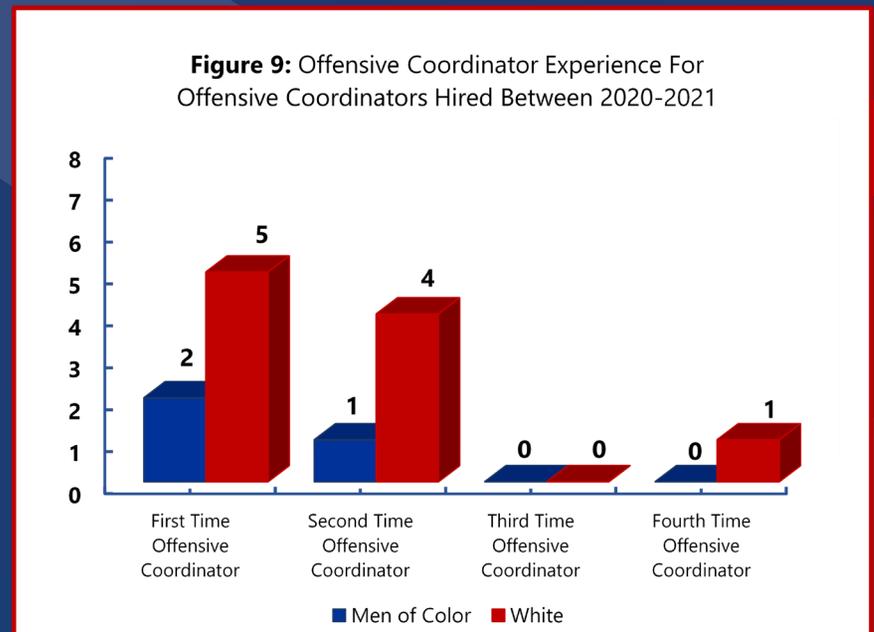
As Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate, between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV), NFL teams hired 10 White offensive coordinators and three offensive coordinators of color. During the same approximate one-year time period, NFL teams hired eight White defensive coordinators and six defensive coordinators of color. Between the start of the 2012 NFL season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021), NFL teams hired 107 White offensive coordinators and 12 offensive coordinators of color. During that same time period, NFL teams hired 61 White defensive coordinators and 39 defensive coordinators of color (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Offensive and Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2012-2021



Seven of the 13 offensive coordinators hired between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV) are currently holding an NFL offensive coordinator position for the first time. Five of the 13 offensive coordinators hired during this time period are serving as an NFL offensive coordinator for the second time. And, one offensive coordinator hired during this time period is serving as an NFL offensive coordinator for the fourth time (see Figure 9).

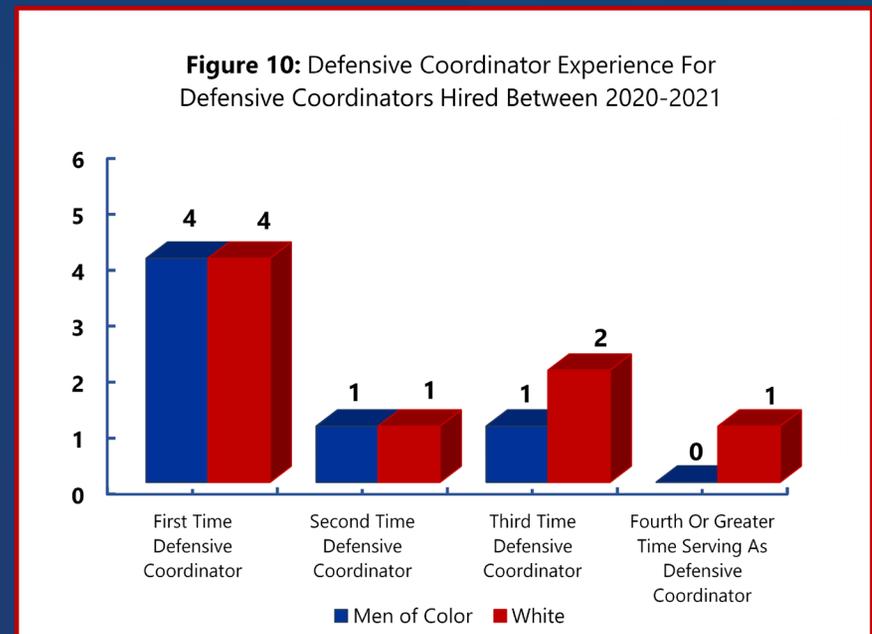
Figure 9: Offensive Coordinator Experience For Offensive Coordinators Hired Between 2020-2021



One of the 13 offensive coordinators hired between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV) served as the head coach of a different NFL team immediately before being named offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Two of the 13 offensive coordinators hired during this same time period held the offensive coordinator position with a different NFL team immediately before being named offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Four of the 13 recently hired offensive coordinators held the quarterbacks coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Two of the 13 recently hired offensive coordinators held the tight ends coach position with their current NFL team immediately before being promoted to offensive coordinator. Three of the 13 recently hired offensive coordinators held the passing game coordinator position with a different NFL team immediately before being hired as offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. And, one of the 13 recently hired offensive coordinators served as running backs coach and run game coordinator with his current NFL team immediately before being promoted to offensive coordinator.

Eight of the 14 defensive coordinators hired between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV) are currently holding an NFL defensive coordinator position for the first time. Two of the 14 defensive coordinators hired during this time period are serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the second time. Three of the 14 recently hired defensive coordinators are serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the third time. One recently hired defensive coordinator is serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the fourth time (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Defensive Coordinator Experience For Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2020-2021



One of the 14 defensive coordinators hired between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV) served as the head coach of a different NFL team immediately before being named defensive coordinator of their current NFL team.

Three of the 14 defensive coordinators hired during this same time period held the defensive coordinator position with a different NFL team immediately before being named defensive coordinator of their current NFL team—it is important to note that Dean Pees most recently served as defensive coordinator of the Detroit Lions during the 2019 NFL season. Four of the 14 recently hired defensive coordinators served as defensive back (secondary) coaches with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) defensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Four of the 14 recently hired defensive coordinators served as linebackers coaches with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) defensive coordinator of their current NFL team.

One of the 14 recently hired defensive coordinators held the defensive line coach position with a different NFL team immediately before being named defensive coordinator of their current NFL team. And, one of the 14 recently hired defensive coordinators most recently served as the head coach of a college football team before earning his current defensive coordinator position.

Figure 11: NFL Offensive Coordinator Mobility Patterns (2012-2021)

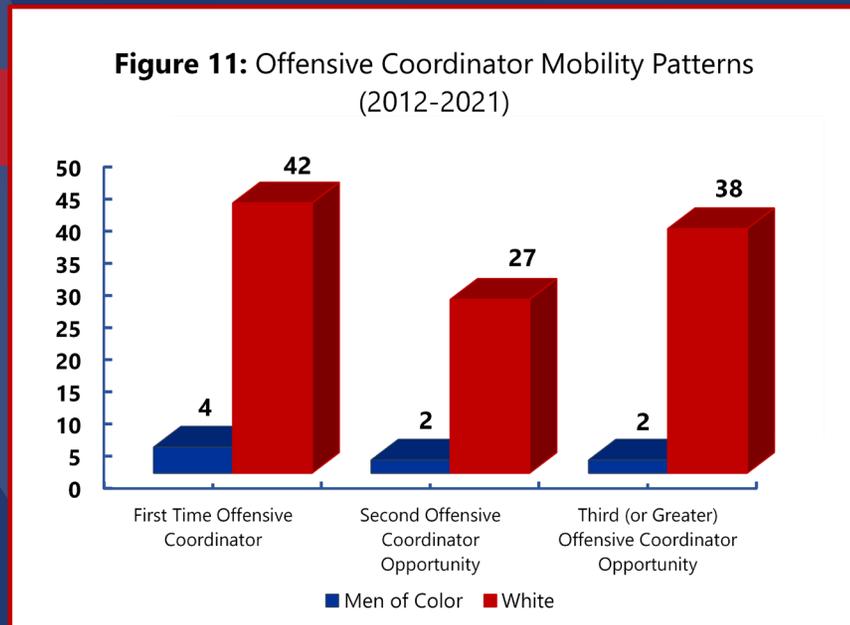
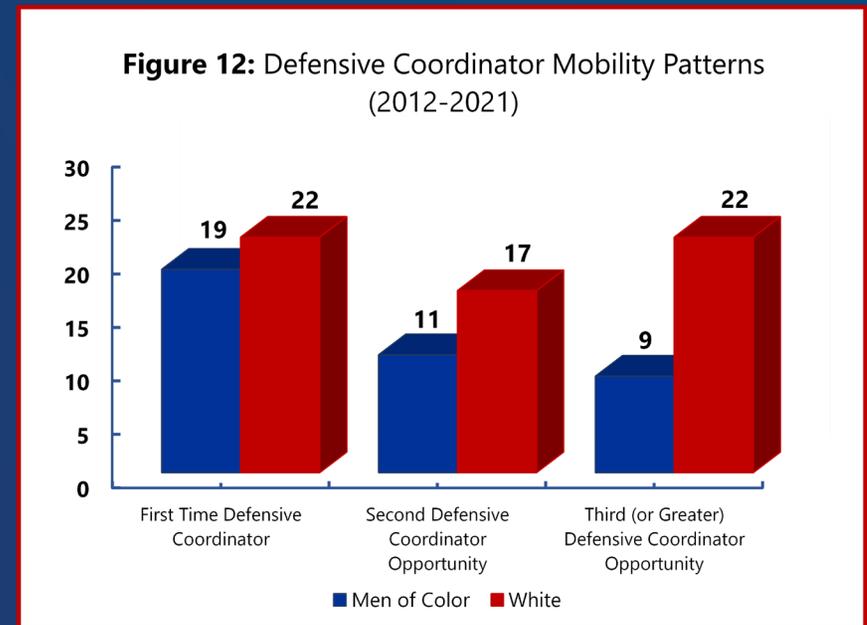


Figure 12: NFL Defensive Coordinator Mobility Patterns (2012-2021)



As illustrated in Figure 11 and Figure 12, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021), 44 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 13 men of color received a similar “second-chance” opportunity to be an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator. In addition, during this same time period, 60 White individuals received a “third or greater chance” to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team, whereas only eleven men of color received a similar “third or greater chance” to be an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator.

General Manager Mobility Patterns

Table 4: General Manager Mobility Patterns (2020-2021)

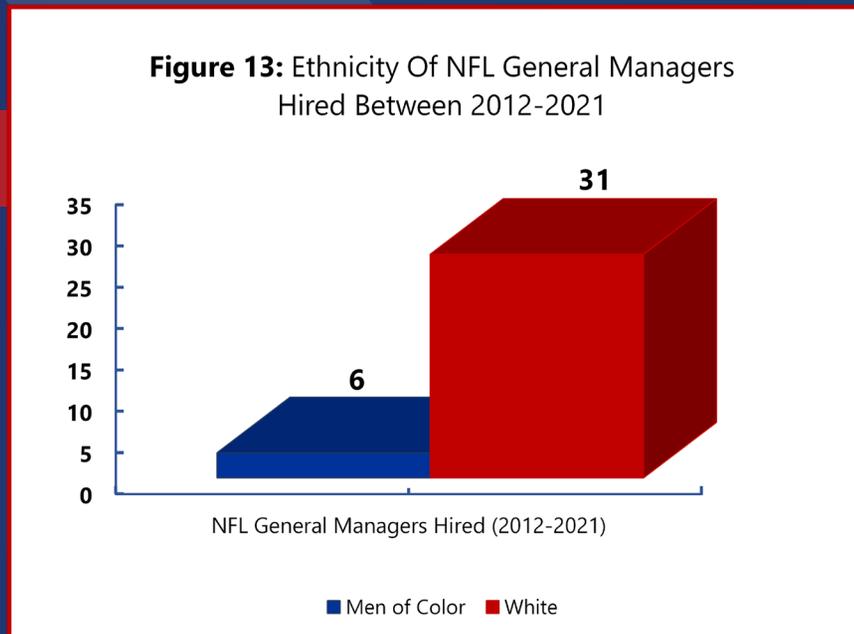
Team	Name of Former General Manager	Race of Former General Manager	Name of New General Manager	Race of New General Manager	Previous Position of New General Manager
Atlanta Falcons	Thomas Dimitroff	White	Terry Fontenot	African American	Assistant General Manager/ Vice President of Pro Personnel, New Orleans Saints
Carolina Panthers	Marty Hurney	White	Scott Fitterer	White	Co-Director of Player Personnel, Seattle Seahawks
Denver Broncos	John Elway	White	George Paton	White	Assistant General Manager, Minnesota Vikings
Detroit Lions	Bob Quinn	White	Brad Holmes	African American	Director of College Scouting, Los Angeles Rams
Houston Texans	Bill O'Brien	White	Nick Caserio	White	Director of Player Personnel, New England Patriots
Jacksonville Jaguars	David Caldwell	White	Trent Baalke	White	Director of Player Personnel, Jacksonville Jaguars
Washington Football Team	[No General Manager for 2020 Season]	[Not Applicable]	Martin Mayhew	African American	Vice President of Player Personnel, San Francisco 49ers

Date range for data: February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) to February 7, 2021 (date of Super Bowl LV)

As Table 4 illustrates, between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV), NFL teams replaced six White general managers. During that same time period, four White general managers were hired and three African American general managers were hired. It is important to note that, during the 2020 NFL season, Ron Rivera functioned as the primary football executive for Washington; the team did not have an official general manager. Between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and kickoff at Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021), NFL teams hired 37 general managers—31 of the 37 general managers hired during this time frame are White individuals (see Figure 13).

Between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and kickoff at Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021), NFL teams hired 37 general managers—31 of the 37 general managers hired during this time frame are White individuals.

Figure 13: Ethnicity Of NFL General Managers Hired Between 2012 - 2021



"The abysmal hiring record of Black head coaches indicates that most franchises continue to struggle with their identity and role in social progress. To be blunt, this isn't an issue of just color; this is an issue of Black leadership and White decision-making within the sport."

- Kenneth Shropshire, CEO of Global Sport Institute at Arizona State University

"If you're a general manager or coach, you're making big decisions that can alter the trajectory of an entire organization, and to get those decisions right more often than not... I think that when you build a diverse football operation -- not just demographically, but also in experience and cognitively with peoples' way of thinking -- I think it's overall better for business and better for decision-making. People are comfortable with what they've known and experienced ... I'm fortunate that our ownership group has been active in that. Not everyone is as naturally proactive in that space, but it requires deliberate thought ... it leads to better decisions, better business, and that's why you do it."

- Andrew Berry, General Manager of Cleveland Browns

DATA ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

Coordinator Access Barriers and “The Reshuffling Effect”—Limiting the Leadership Talent Pipeline and Restricting Occupational Mobility Pathways

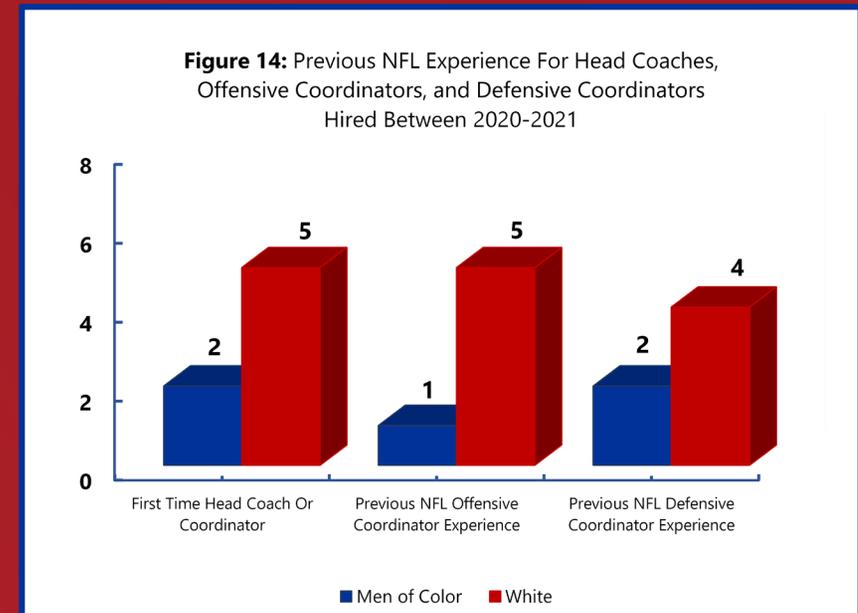
A primary challenge for candidates of color is breaking into the head coach pipeline, as many head coaches and key position coaches continue to get “reshuffled,” thereby preventing new talent from entering the candidate pipeline. This “reshuffling effect” reduces the number of opportunities for new candidates to break into the head coach pipeline.

Findings in the current research study indicate six of the 13 recently hired offensive coordinators previously served at least one prior stint as an NFL offensive coordinator for one or more full NFL seasons. In addition, six of the 14 recently hired defensive coordinators have previously served as an NFL defensive coordinator (see Figure 14).

“It is unfortunate that the performances of coordinators like Eric Bieniemy, Todd Bowles, Byron Leftwich, Leslie Frazier, and Joe Woods, may not meet what appears as ‘ever-evolving standards’ for becoming a Black Head Coach in the NFL. The prospect for second chances is proving to be even more elusive ... All capable of providing the vision, leadership, and expertise to lead a championship effort.”

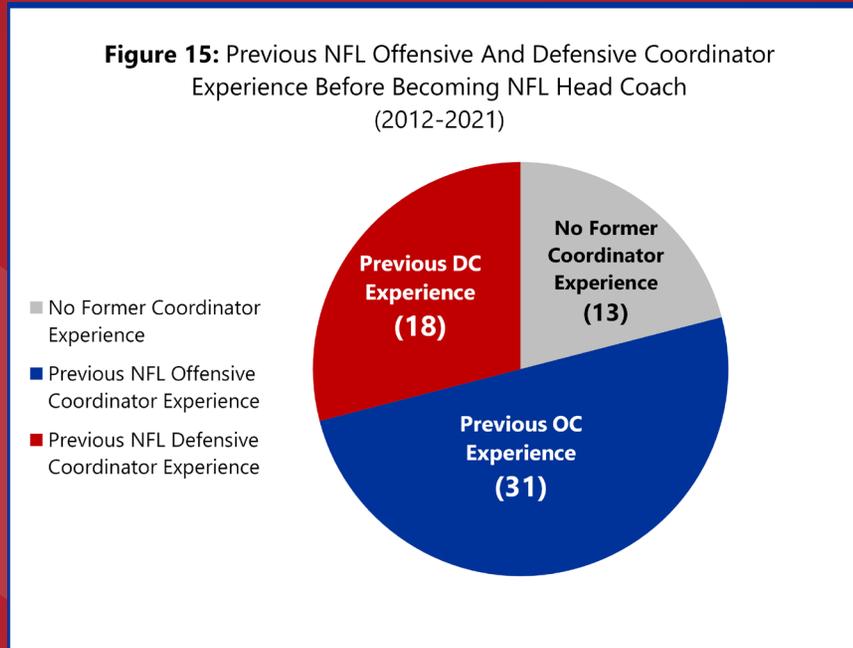
- Rod Graves, Executive Director of Fritz Pollard Alliance

Figure 14: Previous NFL Experience For Head Coaches, Offensive Coordinators, and Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2020-2021



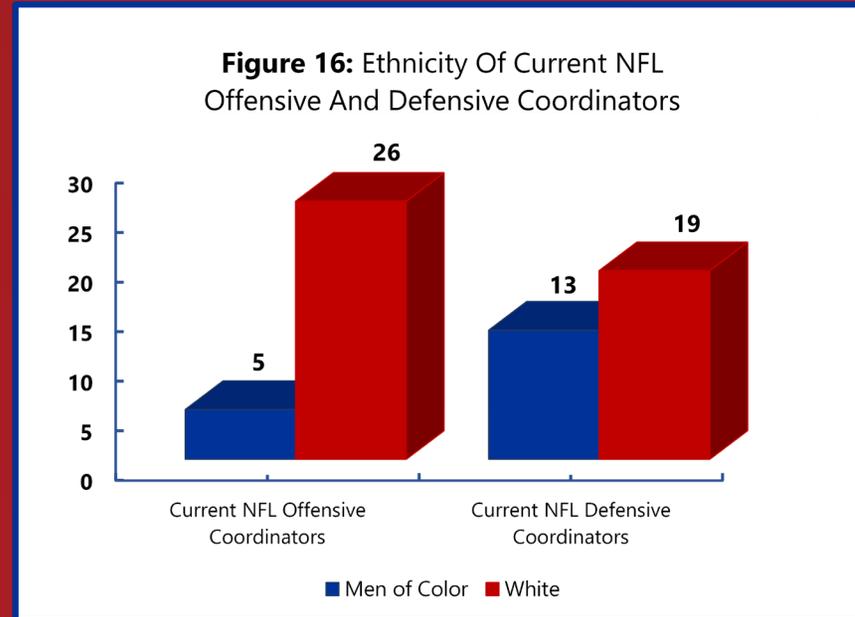
Findings in the current research study also indicate 31 out of the 62 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously an offensive coordinator in the NFL for one or more full NFL seasons before earning a head coach opportunity (including Nick Sirianni and Arthur Smith). Eighteen of the 62 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 (including Robert Saleh and Brandon Staley). As a result, 49 of the 62 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously an NFL level offensive or defensive coordinator—recent head coach hires Dan Campbell, David Culley and Urban Meyer do not have any previous NFL level coordinator experience (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Previous NFL Offensive And Defensive Coordinator Experience Before Becoming NFL Head Coach (2012-2021)



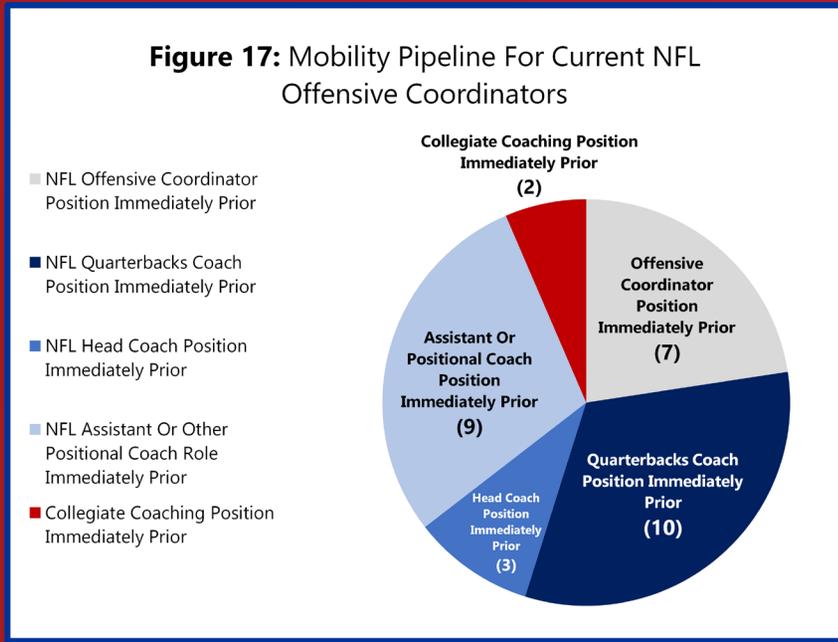
These findings indicate that the offensive coordinator position is historically (but not always) the primary pipeline for aspiring first-time NFL head coaches, whereas defensive coordinator can be viewed as the next most viable pipeline for prospective first-time NFL head coaches. This data concerning common coaching mobility pathways underscores 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. NFL coordinator experience is often viewed as essential with respect to NFL head coach prospects—especially for candidates of color. However, a primary occupational mobility access barrier for coaches of color exists at the coordinator level—only five of the 31 current NFL offensive coordinators are men of color, and currently 13 of the 32 current NFL defensive coordinators are men of color (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Ethnicity Of Current NFL Coordinators



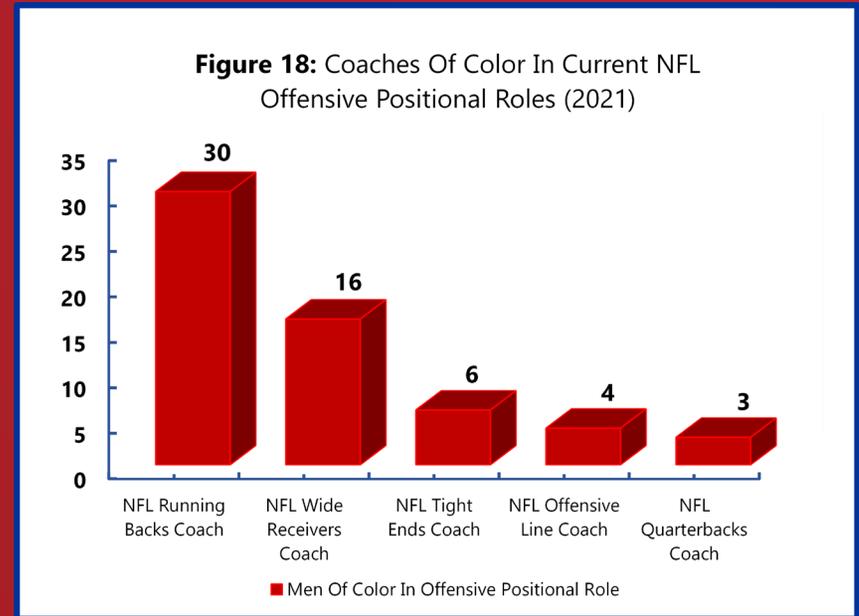
Ten of the 31 current offensive coordinators of NFL teams held the quarterbacks coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Seven of the 31 offensive coordinators of NFL teams served as offensive coordinators of another NFL team immediately prior to being named offensive coordinator of their current team. Three of the 31 current offensive coordinators of NFL teams served as head coaches of another NFL team immediately prior to being named offensive coordinator of their current team. The remaining 11 current NFL offensive coordinators served in the following positions immediately before being named to their current offensive coordinator position: tight ends coach (prior position of four current offensive coordinators), passing game coordinator (prior position of three current offensive coordinators), running backs coach (prior position of two current offensive coordinators), college level offensive coordinator (prior position of one current offensive coordinator) and college level passing game coordinator and wide receivers coach (prior position of one current offensive coordinator) (see Figure 17). Notably, 11 of the 31 current NFL offensive coordinators earned internal promotions with their current team from coaching positions such as quarterbacks coach, tight ends coach and running backs coach.

Figure 17: Mobility Pipeline For Current NFL Offensive Coordinators



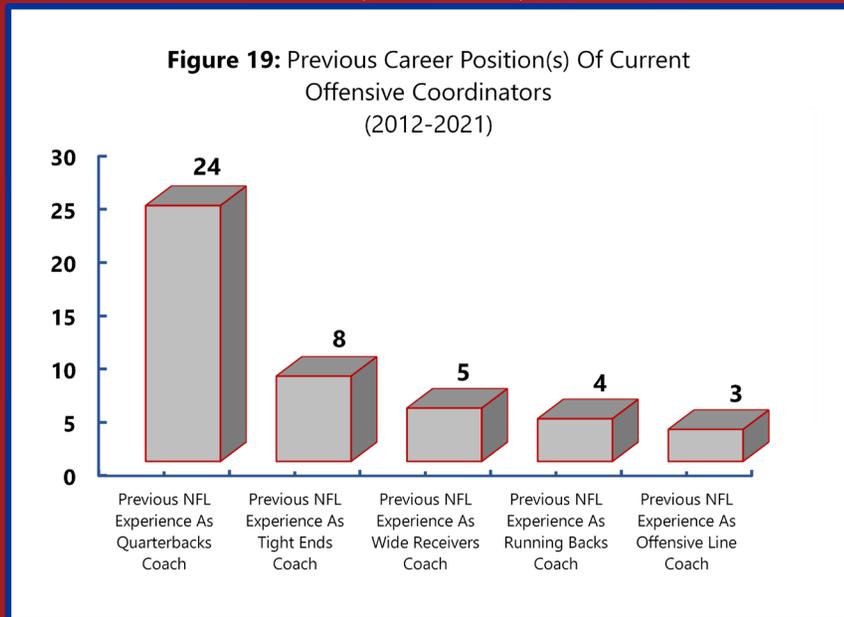
The vast majority of men of color serving as offensive position coaches oversee running backs (30 current men of color serving as NFL running backs coaches as of February 7, 2021) or wide receivers (16 men of color currently serving as NFL wide receivers coaches as of February 7, 2021), whereas only three African American coaches (Charles London, Pep Hamilton and Brian Johnson) currently hold the quarterbacks coach position, which functions as a primary pipeline to become an offensive coordinator—it is important to note that Marcus Brady, last year’s lone quarterbacks coach of color, was internally promoted to offensive coordinator of the Indianapolis Colts. In addition, as of February 7, 2021, four men of color served as offensive line coaches and six men of color served as tight ends coaches for NFL teams (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Coaches Of Color In Current NFL Offensive Positional Roles (2021)



Twenty-four of the 31 current NFL offensive coordinators have prior experience as quarterbacks coaches at the NFL level. Eight current offensive coordinators have prior experience as NFL tight ends coaches. Five current offensive coordinators have prior experience as NFL wide receivers coaches. Four current offensive coordinators have prior experience as NFL running backs coaches. And, three current offensive coordinators have prior experience as NFL offensive line coaches (see Figure 19).

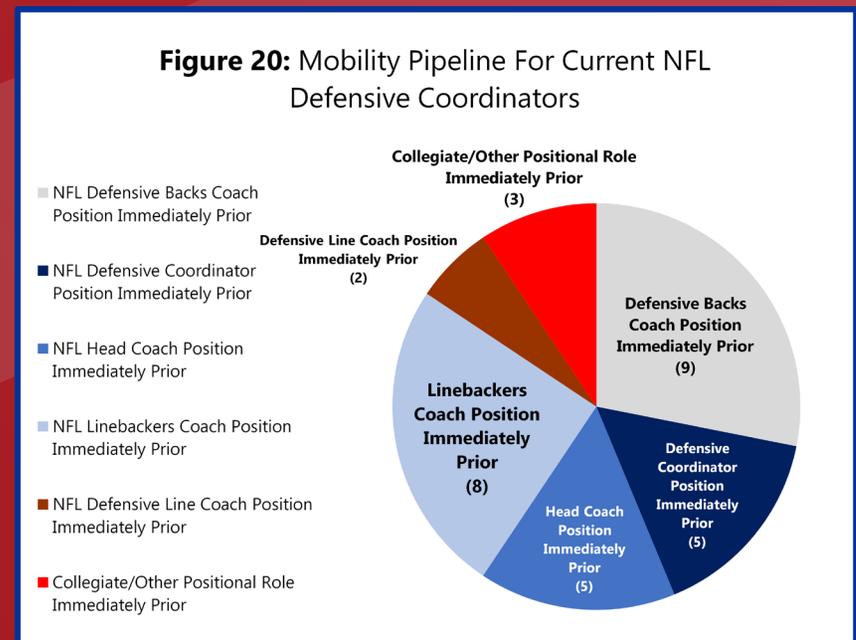
Figure 19: Previous Career Position(s) Of Current Offensive Coordinators (2012-2021)



The occupational mobility patterns for NFL defensive coordinators show more potential and promise for men of color to break into this key head coach pipeline position. Nine of the 32 current NFL defensive coordinators held the defensive backs (secondary) coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) defensive coordinator of their current NFL team—it is important to note that several of these current defensive coordinators previously held positions with multiple titles such as “assistant head coach and secondary coach.” Eight of the 32 current NFL defensive coordinators held the linebackers coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) defensive coordinator of their current NFL team—it is important to note that several of these current defensive coordinators previously held positions with multiple titles such as “linebackers coach and passing game coordinator.” Five of the 32 current defensive coordinators of NFL teams served as head coaches of another NFL team as their most recent full-time position in the NFL prior to being named defensive coordinator of their current team. Five of the 32 current defensive coordinators served as defensive coordinators of another NFL team immediately prior to being named defensive coordinator of their current team.

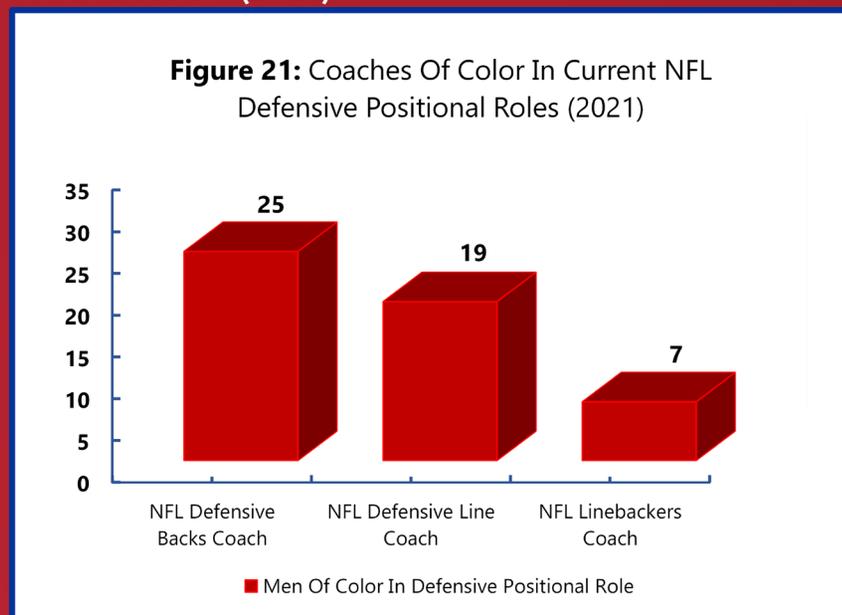
Two of the 32 current NFL defensive coordinators held the defensive line coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) defensive coordinator of their current NFL team. The remaining three current NFL defensive coordinators served in the following coaching roles immediately prior to earning their current position: defensive pass game coordinator and quarterbacks coach, college level head coach and college level defensive coordinator (see Figure 20). Notably, eight of the 32 current NFL defensive coordinators earned internal promotions with their current team from coaching positions such as defensive line coach and linebackers coach.

Figure 20: Mobility Pipeline For Current NFL Defensive Coordinators



The majority of men of color serving as defensive position coaches oversee defensive backs (25 current men of color serving as NFL defensive backs (secondary) coaches as of February 7, 2021—representing approximately 73% of all defensive backs (secondary) coaches). In addition, as of February 7, 2021, 19 men of color served as NFL defensive line coaches and seven men of color served as linebackers coaches (see Figure 21). The defensive backs (secondary), defensive line and linebackers coach positions presently function as three of the more viable occupational mobility pathways for coaches of color in the NFL who aspire to earn defensive coordinator and/or head coach opportunities.

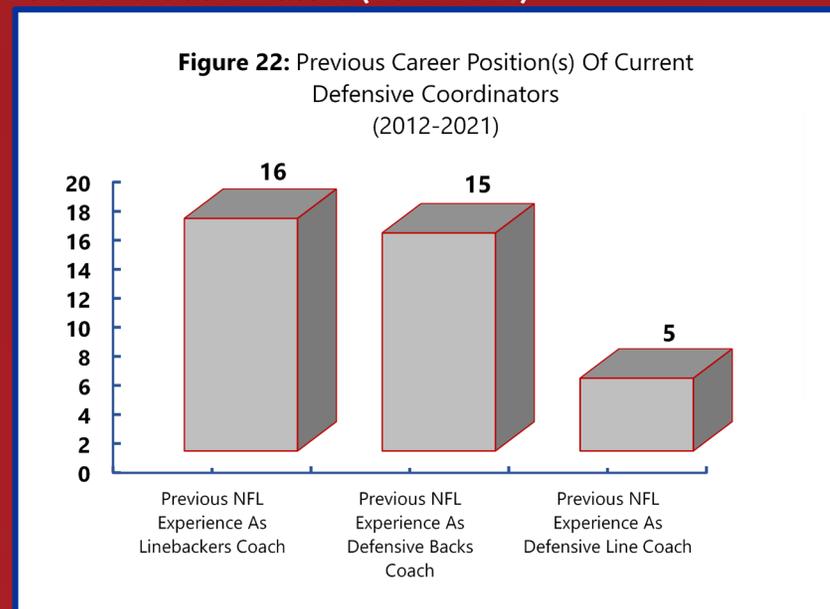
Figure 21: Coaches Of Color In Current NFL Defensive Positional Roles (2021)



Sixteen of the 32 current NFL defensive coordinators have prior experience as linebackers coaches at the NFL level. Fifteen current defensive coordinators have prior NFL experience as defensive back (secondary) coaches. And, five current defensive coordinators have prior NFL experience as defensive line coaches (see Figure 22). Again, this data demonstrates key viable mobility pathways for men of color with respect to earning a defensive coordinator position within the NFL.

In addition to developing talent (that is, creating a talent pipeline for hiring decision-makers to consider), it is essential to identify and monitor the core occupational mobility pathways with respect to men of color eventually earning a head coach opportunity.

Figure 22: Previous Career Position(s) Of Current Defensive Coordinators (2012-2021)



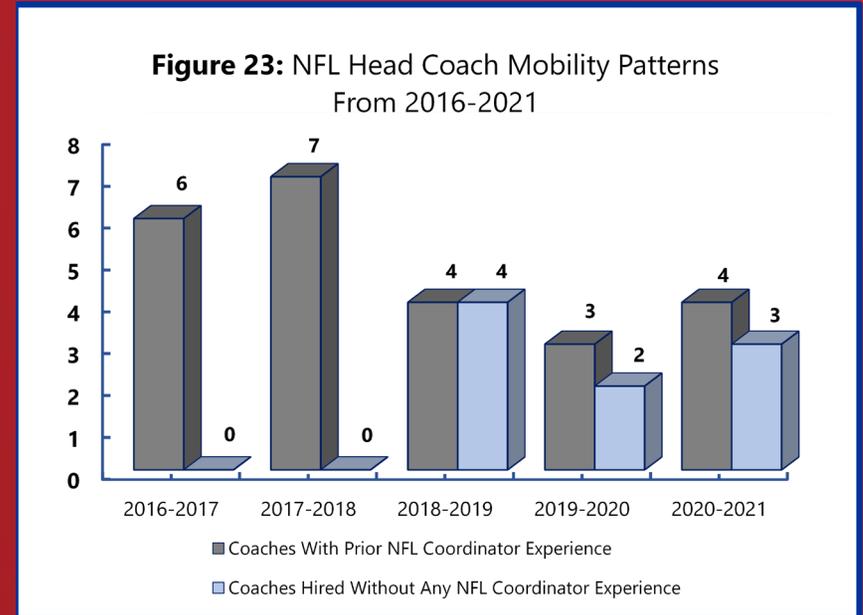
Two out of the seven head coaches hired between February 3, 2020 (day following Super Bowl LIV) and February 7, 2021 (day of Super Bowl LV) have extensive offensive coaching backgrounds (including NFL offensive coordinator experience) (Nick Sirianni and Arthur Smith). Similarly, two of the seven recently hired head coaches have extensive defensive coaching backgrounds (including NFL defensive coordinator experience) (Robert Saleh and Brandon Staley). Dan Campbell, David Culley and Urban Meyer have not previously served as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator at the NFL level.

For comparison purposes, two out of the five head coaches hired between February 4, 2019 (day following Super Bowl LIII) and February 2, 2020 (day of Super Bowl LIV) had extensive offensive coaching backgrounds (including NFL offensive coordinator experience) (Mike McCarthy and Kevin Stefanski), as compared with only one head coach hired during this time period with an extensive defensive coaching background (including NFL defensive coordinator experience) (Ron Rivera). Matt Rhule and Joe Judge both had offensive and defensive position coach experience at the college and NFL levels; however, neither of these two current NFL head coaches previously served as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator at the NFL level prior to earning their current NFL head coach position.

Additionally, six of the eight head coaches hired between February 5, 2018 (day following Super Bowl LII) and February 3, 2019 (day of Super Bowl LIII) had offensive coaching backgrounds (including NFL offensive coordinator experience) as compared with only two coaches with a defensive coaching background (including NFL defensive coordinator experience); notably—similar to Matt Rhule and Joe Judge—four of these eight NFL head coaches (Brian Flores, Kliff Kingsbury, Freddie Kitchens and Zac Taylor) did not previously officially serve as an NFL level coordinator for at least one NFL season.

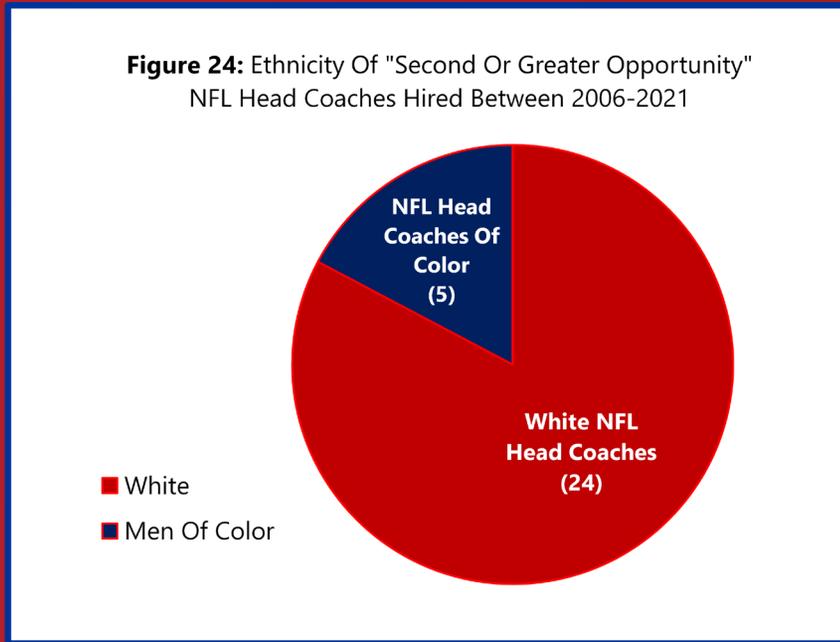
Finally, all seven of the head coaches hired between the day following Super Bowl LI (February 6, 2017) and kickoff at Super Bowl LII (February 4, 2018) had previous NFL level coordinator experience (four as offensive coordinators and three as defensive coordinators). In addition, all six head coaches 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) had prior NFL coordinator experience (four as offensive coordinators and two as defensive coordinators) (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: NFL Coach Mobility Patterns From 2016-2021



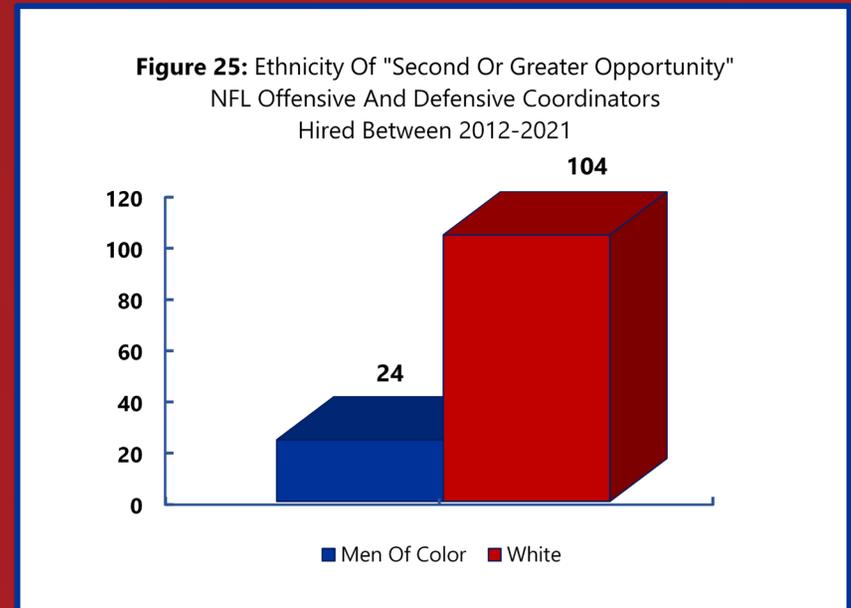
Recent combined research by the NFL league office and the authors of this report revealed 29 out of 100 NFL head coaches hired during the sixteen-year period from 2006-2021 were former NFL head coaches. Five of these 29 “second or greater opportunity” head coaches hired during this sixteen-year period were men of color (see Figure 24). Similarly, since 1963, 11 different coaches of color (46% of the 24 total head coaches of color from 1963-2021) have received a second head coach opportunity in the NFL. These findings demonstrate that in order to be hired as a head coach in the NFL, sometimes the perceived most valuable career background is previous experience as an NFL head coach. Overall findings in this research study once again reveal a troubling “reshuffling effect” in which recently “separated” (i.e., promoted, fired, resigned, retired 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 and defensive line coach, thereby limiting the overall number of opportunities for prospective first-time NFL head coaches.

Figure 24: Ethnicity Of "Second Or Greater Opportunity" NFL Head Coaches Hired Between 2006-2021



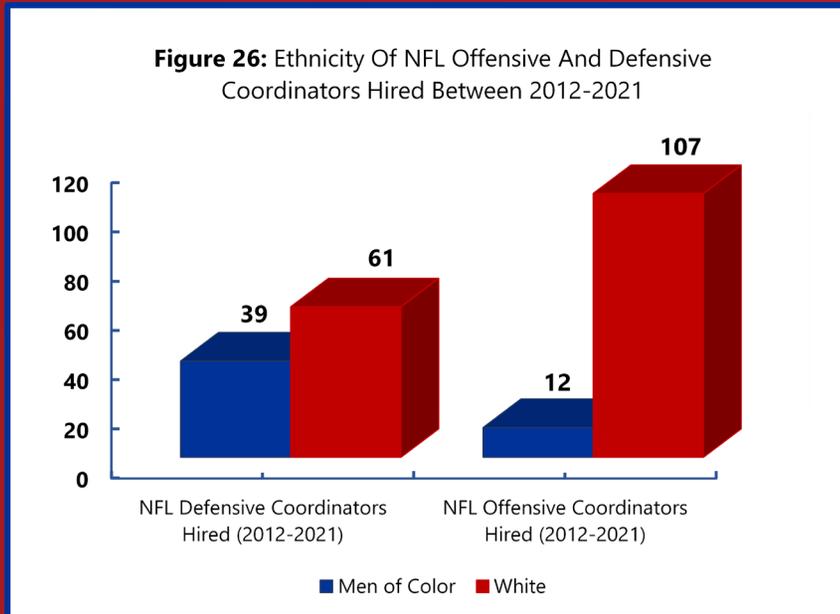
Findings in this research report also indicate a prevalence of the reshuffling effect with respect to the same individuals repeatedly hired for NFL team coordinator positions, which prevents new talent from entering key head coach pipelines. For example, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LV (February 7, 2021), 104 White individuals have received at least a second opportunity to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team. Only 24 men of color have received a similar "second or greater" opportunity during the same time period; notably, 20 of these 24 "second or greater chances" have been for men of color hired as defensive coordinators with only four men of color receiving a "second or greater chance" to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator (see Figure 25).

Figure 25: Ethnicity Of "Second Or Greater Opportunity" NFL Offensive And Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2012-2021



While it is somewhat encouraging that 39% (39 out of 100) of the defensive coordinators hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season are coordinators of color, only 10% (12 out of 119) of the offensive coordinators hired during this same time period have been coordinators of color (see Figure 26). In addition, although it is likewise encouraging that Raheem Morris, Anthony Lynn and Lovie Smith each recently earned another opportunity to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator, the hiring of these three "second chance" coordinators nonetheless prevents new prospects of color from entering the head coach talent pipeline and mobility pathway.

Figure 26: Ethnicity Of NFL Offensive And Defensive Coordinators Hired Between 2012-2021

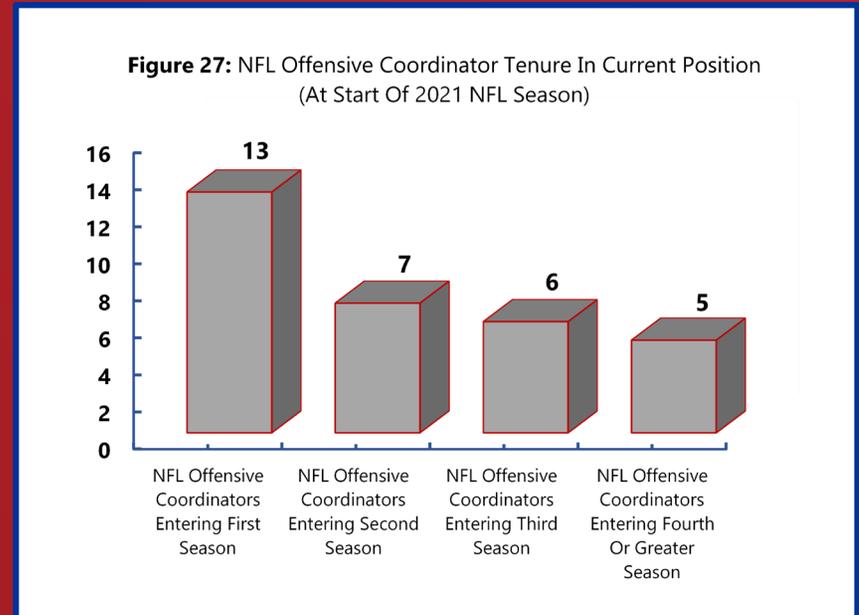


Occupational Mobility and Job Tenure—Change as the Consistent Constant

This research study also analyzed the tenure/stint (that is, length of time in current positions) of all current offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators. For current NFL offensive coordinators, the average length of time is only 1.6 years in the current position. Twenty-six current NFL offensive coordinators have been in their current position for two NFL seasons or fewer. More specifically, 13 offensive coordinators will be entering their first season in such position during the upcoming 2021 NFL season, seven offensive coordinators will be starting their second NFL season in their current offensive coordinator position, and six offensive coordinators will be starting their third NFL season in their current offensive coordinator position. Three NFL offensive coordinators have been in their current position for three prior NFL seasons and will be starting their fourth season as offensive coordinator (Brian Daboll, Eric Bieniemy and Greg Olson).

Only two NFL offensive coordinators have been in their current position for four or more NFL seasons (Pete Carmichael is entering his 13th season as offensive coordinator of the New Orleans Saints and Josh McDaniels is entering his 10th season as offensive coordinator of the New England Patriots) (see Figure 27).

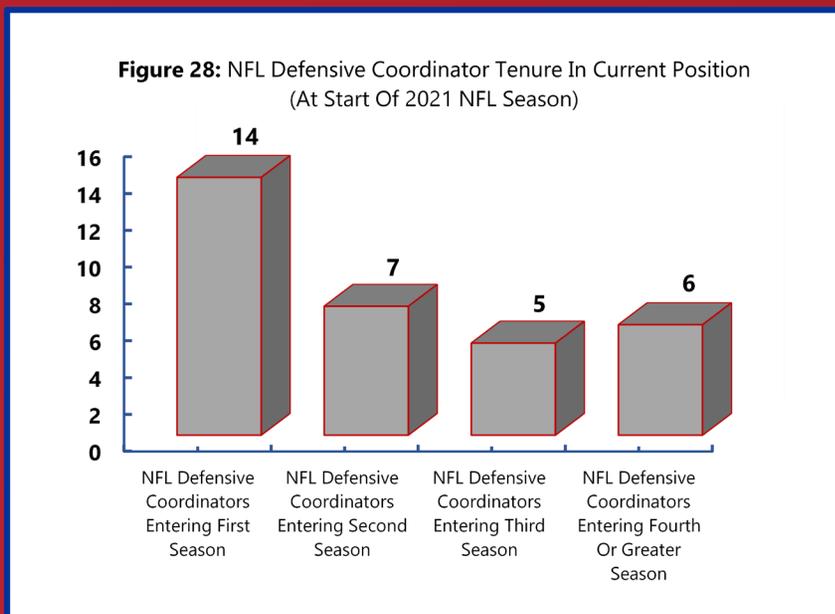
Figure 27: NFL Offensive Coordinator Tenure In Current Position (At Start Of 2021 NFL Season)



For current NFL offensive coordinators, the average length of time is only 1.6 years in the current position. Twenty-six current NFL offensive coordinators have been in their current position for two NFL seasons or fewer.

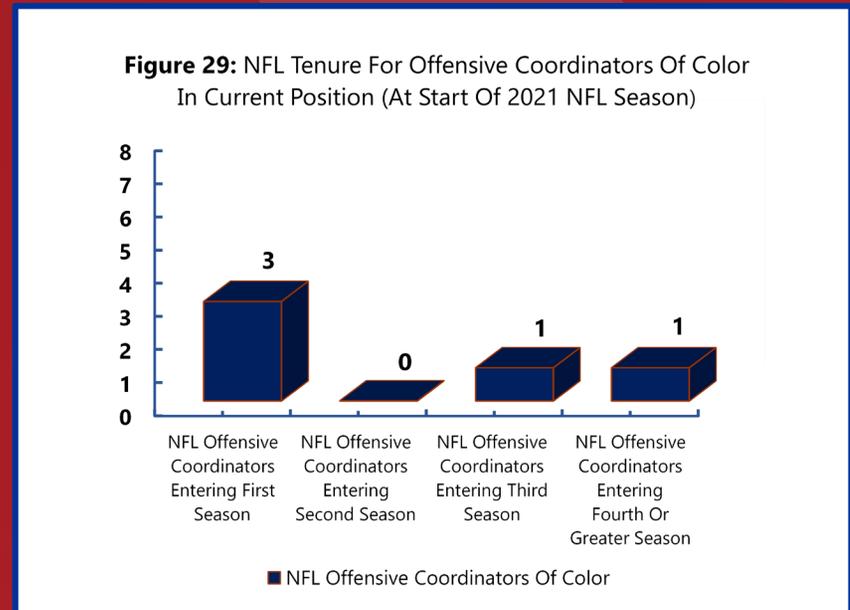
The data is comparable for the stint/tenure of current NFL defensive coordinators; the average length of time is approximately 1.3 years in the current position. Twenty-six current NFL defensive coordinators have been in their current position for two or fewer NFL seasons. More specifically, 14 defensive coordinators will be entering their first season in such position during the upcoming 2021 NFL season, seven defensive coordinators will be starting their second NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position, and five defensive coordinators will be starting their third NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position. Three NFL defensive coordinators have been in their current position for three prior NFL seasons and will be starting their fourth season as defensive coordinator (Matt Eberflus, Don “Wink” Martindale and Ken Norton Jr). Only three NFL defensive coordinators have been in their current position for four or more NFL seasons (Leslie Frazier, Dennis Allen and Keith Butler) (see Figure 28). Seven NFL teams made changes at both the offensive coordinator and defensive coordinator positions during the most recent hiring cycle (2020-2021).

Figure 28: NFL Defensive Coordinator Tenure In Current Position (At Start Of 2021 NFL Season)



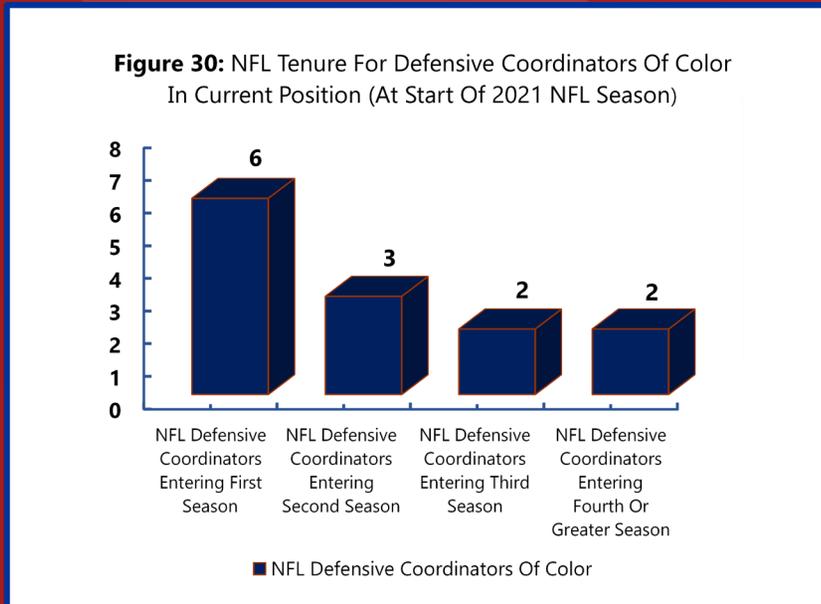
The average tenure/stint in the current position for the five men of color in NFL offensive coordinator positions is 1 year. Three African American offensive coordinators were recently hired. Eric Bieniemy will be starting his fourth NFL season as offensive coordinator of the Kansas City Chiefs, and Byron Leftwich will be entering his third season as offensive coordinator of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (see Figure 29).

Figure 29: NFL Tenure For Offensive Coordinators Of Color In Current Position (At Start Of 2021 NFL Season)



The average tenure/stint in the current position for the 13 current men of color in defensive coordinator positions is 1.1 years—no current defensive coordinator of color has served in their current defensive coordinator position for more than four prior NFL seasons. Six defensive coordinators of color will be starting their first NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position, three defensive coordinators of color will be starting their second NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position, two defensive coordinators of color will be entering their third NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position and two defensive coordinators of color will be starting their fourth or greater NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position (Ken Norton Jr. and Leslie Frazier) (see Figure 30).

Figure 30: NFL Tenure For Defensive Coordinators Of Color In Current Position (At Start Of 2021 NFL Season)



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

In May 2020, the NFL extended the Rooney Rule to require that each hiring team interview at least two external minority candidates for head coach openings. Teams are also required to interview at least one external minority candidate for general manager (“primary football executive”) vacancies as well as one minority candidate for offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator and special teams coordinator openings.

The findings of the current study support the power of social capital and the impact of men of color serving in decision-making leadership positions as well as men of color developing a mentor/mentee relationship with current NFL head coaches and anticipated future head coach candidates.

For example, Bruce Arians (current head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers) has served as a professional mentor to Todd Bowles ever since Arians coached Bowles when Bowles was a collegiate football student-athlete at Temple University. Arians and Bowles then worked together on the Cleveland Browns coaching staff from 2001-2003. When Arians was named head coach of the Arizona Cardinals in 2013, he promptly hired Todd Bowles as defensive coordinator. In 2015, Bruce Arians made the following comments about Todd Bowles’ coaching abilities: “He was one of the smartest players I’ve ever coached, and then we had to work together in Cleveland, and I saw how great of a teacher he had become” (via Sports Illustrated). Fast forward to January 2019—shortly after being named the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Arians once again hired Bowles to serve as the team’s defensive coordinator. Arians also hired several other men of color who are part of his “coaching tree” including Byron Leftwich (offensive coordinator), Harold Goodwin (assistant head coach and run game coordinator), Keith Armstrong (special teams coordinator) and Kevin Ross (defensive backs coach). The Tampa Bay Buccaneers are the only NFL team with men of color serving as offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator and special teams coordinator. In addition, the Buccaneers currently have one of the most diverse coaching staffs overall within the entire league: out of 29 total members on the primary coaching staff, 13 are coaches of color and two members of the coaching roster are women.

Similarly, Arthur Smith (new Atlanta Falcons head coach) hired coordinators in part based on his personal and professional connections with them—Smith and newly hired Falcons offensive coordinator Dave Ragone worked together with the Tennessee Titans from 2011-2013, and Smith similarly worked with newly hired Falcons defensive coordinator Dean Pees on the Titans’ coaching staff from 2018-2019. Likewise, Nick Sirianni (new Philadelphia Eagles head coach) hired coordinators he previously worked with—Sirianni and newly hired Eagles offensive coordinator Shane Steichen worked together with the Chargers from 2014-2017, and Sirianni similarly worked with newly hired Falcons defensive coordinator Jonathan Gannon on the Colts’ coaching staff from 2018-2020.

NFL Comparison with Occupational Mobility for College Football Coaches

Between January 1, 2020 and February 22, 2021, 22 head coach positions were filled at NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision athletics programs. Four of the 22 head coaches who were fired or who resigned during this most recent college football coach hiring cycle were coaches of color. Five of the 22 recently hired college head football coaches were coaches of color. It is important to note that seven of the 22 recently hired college football coaches were previously serving as head football coach at another institution (Gus Malzahn, Blake Anderson, Bryan Harsin, Mel Tucker, Mike Leach, Josh Heupel and Nick Rolovich). Of the four minority coaches who were replaced, only one received another head coaching opportunity (Mel Tucker).

Overall, similar parallel issues exist at both the NFL and collegiate levels with respect to inequities and disparate opportunities based on race/ethnicity, lack of complete transparency during the hiring process and an acknowledged need for continued reform and actionable plans to increase diversity in leadership positions. For example, in January 2021, the LEAD1 Association (the association that represents the 130 member athletic departments of the NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision) published a report titled "Actionable Recommendations to Create More Diverse Senior Leadership in NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision College Sports."

Recommendations for improving diversity and inclusion recently made by leaders within the college athletics space include a combination of heightened advocacy, financial incentives, mentorship initiatives, leadership development training, marketing of rising diverse leaders, evaluating search firms' commitment to diversity along with increased diversity, equity and inclusion training for hiring managers.

Table 5 on the following page provides a summary overview of head coach changes at the FBS college football level during the 2020-2021 hiring cycle.

"Urban Meyer hired former Iowa strength and conditioning coach Chris Doyle to join him as part of the first year staff at the Jacksonville Jaguars. Days after announcing this hire, pressure from various stakeholders resulted in Doyle resigning and Meyer acknowledging in a statement that, 'Chris Doyle came to us this evening to submit his resignation and we have accepted. Chris did not want to be a distraction to what we are building in Jacksonville . . . In retrospect, should have given greater consideration to how his appointment may have affected all involved. We wish him the best as he moves forward in his career.' While African Americans hope to get even one opportunity, individuals like Chris Doyle are allowed to squander positions, engage in overt racist behavior with African American players, and then get another job because of who they know (and who knows them) and wants to do them a favor. Meyer should have given further consideration to how a person with a track record of hateful and disrespectful behavior with comments of intolerance might impact his players in a league with approximately 70 % of NFL ballers being African American."

- Dr. C. Keith Harrison

Table 5: NCAA FBS Head Football Coach Mobility Patterns (2020-2021)

Team	Name of Former Head Coach (Record)	Race of Former Head Coach	Name of New Head Coach	Race of New Head Coach	Previous Position of New Head Coach
Arkansas State University	Blake Anderson (4-7)	White	Butch Jones	White	Assistant to the Head Coach, University of Alabama (NCAA)
Auburn University	Gus Malzahn (6-4)	White	Bryan Harsin	White	Head Coach, Boise State University (NCAA)
Baylor University	Matt Rhule (11-3)	White	Dave Aranda	Mexican American	Associate Head Coach/ Defensive Coordinator/ Linebackers Coach, Louisiana State University (NCAA)
Boise State University	Bryan Harsin (5-2)	White	Andy Avalos	Latino American	Defensive Coordinator/ Inside Linebackers Coach, University of Oregon (NCAA)
Marshall University	John 'Doc' Holiday (7-3)	White	Charles Huff	African American	Associate Head Coach/ Running Backs Coach, University of Alabama (NCAA)
Michigan State University	Mark Dantonio (7-6)	White	Mel Tucker	African American	Head Coach, University of Colorado (NCAA)
Mississippi State University	Joe Moorhead (6-7)	White	Mike Leach	White	Head Coach, Washington State University (NCAA)
San Diego State University	Rocky Long (10-3)	White	Brady Hoke	White	Defensive Line Coach, San Diego State University (NCAA)
University of Arizona	Kevin Sumlin (0-5)	African American	Jedd Fisch	White	Quarterbacks Coach, New England Patriots
University of Central Florida	Josh Heupel (6-4)	White	Gus Malzahn	White	Head Coach, Auburn University (NCAA)
University of Colorado	Mel Tucker (5-7)	African American	Karl Dorrell	African American	Assistant Head Coach/ Wide Receivers Coach, Miami Dolphins
University of Hawaii	Nick Rolovich (10-5)	White	Todd Graham	White	Head Coach, Arizona State University (2017) (NCAA)
University of Illinois	Lovie Smith (2-5)	African American	Bret Bielema	White	Outside Linebackers Coach, New York Giants
University of Louisiana-Monroe	Matt Viator (0-10)	White	Terry Bowden	White	Graduate Assistant, Clemson University (NCAA)
University of South Alabama	Steve Campbell (4-7)	White	Kane Wommack	White	Defensive Coordinator/ Linebackers Coach, Indiana University Bloomington (NCAA)
University of South Carolina	Will Muschamp (2-5)	White	Shane Beamer	White	Assistant Head Coach/ Tight Ends Coach, University of Oklahoma (NCAA)
University of Southern Mississippi	Jay Hopson (0-1)	White	Will Hall	White	Offensive Coordinator, Tulane University (NCAA)
University of Tennessee	Jeremy Pruitt (3-7)	White	Josh Heupel	White	Head Coach, University of Central Florida (NCAA)
University of Texas	Tom Herman (7-3)	White	Steve Sarkisian	White	Offensive Coordinator, University of Alabama (NCAA)
Utah State University	Gary Anderson (0-3)	White	Blake Anderson	White	Head Coach, Arkansas State University (NCAA)
Vanderbilt University	Derek Mason (0-8)	African American	Clark Lea	White	Defensive Coordinator, University of Notre Dame (NCAA)
Washington State University	Mike Leach (6-7)	White	Nick Rolovich	White	Head Coach, University of Hawaii (NCAA)

PRACTICAL PROPOSALS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing Player Involvement During Head Coach Interview Process

In order to improve diverse head coach hiring results in future years, it is recommended that the NFL develop a new policy to involve select players on each hiring team during the head coach interview and subsequent hiring process. For example, in addition to team owners and other front office executives such as a general manager being involved in the decision-making process concerning the hiring of a new head coach, four players on each team hiring a new head coach would be a part of all conversations and interviews concerning new head coach hiring decisions. It is recommended that at least two of the four head coach interview player representatives on each team be men of color. These team player representatives for the head coach hiring process could either be the four players that serve as the representative and co-alternates on the NFLPA board of player representatives, or all players on a team could participate in a separate voting process to select interview process player representatives immediately prior to the commencement of the head coach selection process.

Engaging players within the head coach interview process will further ensure that the players' perspective and input is both heard and valued. Involving players in the interview process would in no way diminish or adversely impact the role of the team owner during the head coach selection process—rather, engaging players would provide additional insight and intel from the perspective of a key constituent (the players themselves).

For example, in the words of a retired NFL player, an effective NFL head coach “is confident, can command the respect of the locker room, is the same person every day regardless of whether the team is winning or trying to stop a losing streak and is a direct communicator.” In addition, these player interview representatives and team owners should participate in league-developed immersive training programs on how to identify coaching talent and what variables should be prioritized during the hiring process.

Improving Interview Transparency and Developing Key Candidate Evaluative Criteria

The NFL could consider making the hiring process even more transparent with a scorecard called the “Transparent Performance Scale,” which might encompass key components that answer the question of what aspects are most important in terms of a person becoming a head coach in the NFL. Key components might include the following checklist with subjective and objective factors that each decision-maker on an NFL team would rank and evaluate: (1) level of trust in candidate; (2) level of perceived risk associated with hiring candidate; (3) candidate’s previous win/loss record and overall coaching success; (4) candidate’s career experience including NFL level coordinator and position coach experience; (5) relationships with decision-makers at the team with which the candidate is interviewing; (6) how the coach was referred to the team; and (7) a comparison to other candidates previously interviewed by the team for the position. Improving a process usually results in improving corresponding outcomes—outcomes that are merit-based and reflect increased, equitable competition for open positions.

League executives and/or independent consultants should analyze key performance factors/indicators of coaches (for example, overall performance of offense and overall performance of players at position coached such as linebackers) to further determine whether coaching performance or other variables drive “the reshuffling effect.” The NFL could also create more detailed guidelines on specific variables that should be valued and evaluated by teams during the general manager, head coach and coordinator hiring process so that candidates fully understand the criteria by which they will be evaluated and teams might be more likely to adhere to a checklist of objective assessment criteria instead of relying on intuition, social capital connectivity and other non-performance based evaluative criteria.

The NFL is encouraged to further examine the conversations and all other communications / correspondence that take place between hiring managers (for example, team owners and general managers), “interview influencers” and job candidates in addition to the required interview list disclosures. Investigating this type of discourse beyond the formal interview process could shed unique and enlightening insight into the many intangible and difficult to quantify variables that result in candidates securing head coach and coordinator positions. It is essential to gain more insight into the actual head coach interview process from the perspective of both the hiring managers (for example, team owners) and interviewees (for example, head coach candidates). One recommendation is to require all head coach interviews to be recorded via video for quality control, consistency and analysis purposes as a supplement to the current excellent league approach of seeking input from candidates not selected for head coach opportunities along with candid feedback from team representatives. The NFL could then effectively and efficiently identify interview trends and themes and make data-driven strategic decisions based on coding of the interview data. It would also be helpful to learn more about how much weight teams place on head coach interviews as compared with the candidates’ body of work and overall experience. For example, neither Nick Sirianni nor Eric Bieniemy were responsible for calling the majority of offensive plays each game and both had the same tenure as NFL offensive coordinators—so, what factors and variables differentiated Nick Sirianni from Eric Bieniemy?

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. Hurried hiring processes typically do not produce optimal outcomes. Rushed hiring processes are common at both the NFL and college level for head coaches. The hiring process needs to evolve, as does the thought process and evaluative criteria of many hiring managers. 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 being “qualified” by the individuals who make the hiring decisions. A 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 NFL is also encouraged to continue focusing on development and readiness initiatives such as media training and leadership philosophy development for coach and coordinator prospects. Participant and facilitator feedback from the Fritz Pollard Alliance Coaching Career Development Series could also serve as another treasure trove of data to complement existing research within this space.

The past hiring cycle demonstrated an ostensibly increased emphasis by some teams with respect to hiring a head coach that can effectively “lead” and “motivate.” The following two “word clouds” spotlight some of the common words and phrases utilized by team executives and members of the media during the most recent hiring cycle to describe general manager and head coach candidates. The most frequently utilized terms to describe general manager and head coach candidates appear in larger font size within each word cloud.

These findings support a continued emphasis on further developing programming for position coaches of color in order to create a more robust pathway to coordinator opportunities. The data in this report also indicates that inherent contradictions exist within the common pipelines to becoming an NFL coordinator or head coach. Stated differently, some of the recently hired coordinators and head coaches “skipped a step” in terms of earning a coordinator or head coach opportunity without the typical prerequisite NFL level experience—this underscores the importance of social capital, personal branding, attribution bias and other non-experience based variables.

Idea Generation for Future Research and Strategic League & Team Innovations

This research study relied on data provided by the NFL league office 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. One of the primary objectives of this research report is to apply existing empirical research to the findings of the current study in order to create awareness and accelerate transparency with the ultimate aspiration of reducing the degree of racial bias and other problematic biases embedded within the overall hiring process. The following recommendations for future research are offered based on the findings in this research study.

Future research should examine the nuances of career mobility and interview “timing” strategies. Detailed 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, as Eric Bieniemy recently interviewed with all seven teams that hired a new head coach but ultimately was not hired by any of these seven teams. In addition, Byron Leftwich was distressingly not extended a

head coach interview opportunity for any of the seven open positions. Future research should also specifically focus on optimal strategies with respect to preparing highly qualified candidates of color for the head coach interview process based on the seemingly evolving and shifting evaluative criteria most highly valued by hiring managers—the creation of innovative and immersive multimedia storytelling content for diverse candidates could add further value to their overall candidacy from the perspective of primary decision-makers in the hiring process.

Future research should examine strategies to improve the overall hiring and firing decision-making process in order to expand the length of tenure (“opportunity to prove themselves”) for head coaches, coordinators and position coaches. For instance, during his four years as head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers, Anthony Lynn coached the team to a 33-31 overall record with one postseason appearance yet was nonetheless fired following the 2020 NFL season. Additional patience and more realistic expectations by those who hire and fire are critical to both creating and sustaining head coaching opportunities for men of color. Similar high position turnover rates have been prevalent at the NFL coordinator level in recent years. For instance, NFL teams have made 73 total changes at the offensive coordinator position during the previous six NFL seasons. Similarly, NFL teams have made 61 total changes at the defensive coordinator position during the previous six NFL seasons. This extremely high turnover rate in key team leadership roles is not ideal from a player development or career trajectory and sustainability perspective.

Future research should continue to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of revisions to the Rooney Rule along with any other complementary initiatives and policies created to improve diversity and inclusion at the NFL team and league levels. For instance, future research should aggregate comprehensive qualitative data (feedback via interviews and focus groups) concerning the perspective and perceptions of team owners, general managers and other team executives related to the perceived value of being rewarded with two compensatory third-round draft picks as a result of hiring and developing leaders of color who are ultimately hired by another team as general manager or head coach.

Stated differently, future research could focus on analyzing whether this newly enacted policy and protocol positively impacts downstream diverse candidate hiring at the position coach levels. Future research could also examine the prospect of extending the draft pick compensation incentive policy to internal team promotions of diverse candidates at the coordinator, head coach and general manager levels. Similarly, future research could analyze the potential viability of a proposed new guideline/policy that would further develop the Rooney Rule concerning head coach hires to require that all NFL teams interview at least one candidate of color with previous NFL level experience (including at least one full season of offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator experience) who also is not currently employed by the hiring team—adding this additional “prior NFL coordinator experience” requirement to the Rooney Rule process could help ensure that the most prepared and compelling candidates of color are provided with a meaningful opportunity to interview.

Future research should analyze the role, influence and impact of search firms in the hiring process for general managers and head coaches in order to assess whether search firms truly add value to and genuinely further league-wide diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. For instance, during the most recent general manager hiring cycle, the Houston Texans seemingly ignored a search firm’s recommendation of two finalist candidates of color (Omar Khan and Louis Riddick) and instead decided to hire a White general manager (Nick Caserio). In addition, future efforts in this area could include the creation of objective quantifiable metrics utilized by the NFL league office to approve select search firms that are involved with the hiring of general managers and other football coach staff.

Future research should also analyze the occupational mobility patterns of individuals who hold leadership positions such as “assistant head coach” and “senior offensive/defensive assistant” to determine the impact of social capital and other applied theoretical constructs on the career prospects of these assistant coaches. For instance, neither David Culley nor Dan Campbell had prior NFL coordinator experience but both had the title of “assistant head coach” before recently being named an NFL head coach. In other words, what leads to some coordinator and coaching candidates being “fast-tracked” from an occupational mobility perspective without the common prerequisite pipeline experience?

Future volumes in this research report series should also include an analysis of viable occupational mobility pathways for women leaders as well as a deeper dive into additional coaching positions such as special teams coordinator.

Future research should analyze the effectiveness and impact of the recently developed Collegiate Coaching Diversity Pledge, which is an opt-in pledge by NCAA Division I athletics directors to include a diverse group of candidates in the finalist pool for head coach vacancies in men’s basketball, women’s basketball, and football. In other words, future research could focus on additional ways to increase the personal commitment of NFL team owners to creating a diverse workforce. Relatedly, future research could focus on the feasibility of creating a more centralized and structured external advocacy paradigm in order to combine the efforts and impact of organizations such as the National Coalition of Minority Football Coaches with the Fritz Pollard Alliance. Centralizing and aligning resources and initiatives might lead to more optimal and optimized advocacy outcomes.

As previously recommended by several industry thought leaders including former NFL head coach Hue Jackson, interviews and hires for select leadership positions “should only take place after all postseason games to avoid ‘punishing’ qualified candidates who are actively working.” Future research could involve the development of a feasibility study with respect to the NFL potentially shifting the allowable/permitted hiring timeline along with prospective rules enforceability challenges.

Future research should also analyze the impact of media portrayals of head coach prospects. For example, a future research study could analyze whether the depth of coverage and/or verbal descriptions utilized by media commentators and game analysts during live telecasts and game recap shows influences the eventual head coach hiring process.

Finally, future research should focus on the perspectives and perceptions of NFL fans who post hateful and racist comments within social and digital media contexts when articles and other content discuss and dissect issues related to coaching and front office equity and equality.

Concluding Thoughts

There is no question that league and team executives (including many team owners) are committed to creating a more diverse and inclusive front office. Incremental progress continues to be made each season. That is commendable. Nonetheless, room for improvement exists especially with respect to the head coach hire decision-making process along with reimagining the mobility pathway for coaches of color. A primary goal of this report is to provide real-time data along with data-driven recommendations to help produce improved results in future hiring cycles, especially concerning the persistence of disparate outcomes at the head coach level. We are hopeful that this fact-focused report further demonstrates the need to transition traction into action with respect to team owners renewing their commitment to a more equitable hiring process and a more diverse and inclusive coaching and front office staff. Data and policies can create incremental change and result in a meaningful paradigm and culture shift over the long term by facilitating heightened awareness and increased engagement. During the eight years that this occupational mobility report has been published, more than 30 practical proposals and suggestions have been developed—some of which have been implemented at the NFL league and/or team levels. The past eight years of collaborative work ultimately led to the NFL creating the “7-Point Mobility Plan,” which is a strategic, thoughtful, ambitious and pragmatic blueprint for meaningful scalable improvements.

All league and team stakeholders must remain committed to long-term sustainable collaborative outcomes to further improve diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels. Nonetheless, team owners remain in the most compelling position to help accelerate the pace of change and ensure that the commitment to diversity and inclusion remains a priority in future hiring cycles. The diverse candidate pool has been exponentially expanded in recent years—it is now time for all team owners to expand their thinking and overall approach when it comes to making key football staff hiring decisions in order to ensure an equitable process and produce an optimal result. In the wise words of Dasha Smith, NFL executive vice president and chief administrative officer: “At the end of the day, we all need and must see different outcomes.”

"It has to start with those two things. Without a level of transparency and accountability, none of us should be surprised when there are only incremental steps of change or times where we've gone backward. There are concrete ways of addressing this. A lot of them mirror what people have been doing in corporate America for years. But increasing transparency, giving someone the responsibility of increasing diversity and then making it accountable, I think if you have those three things as the core of how you want to make the league look like its membership and its community, I think those are the only ways to go about it."

- DeMaurice Smith, NFLPA Executive Director

BIOS OF RESEARCH TEAM & AUTHORS OF REPORT

Dr. C. Keith Harrison is a Professor at UCF as well as Associate Chair / Chief Academic Officer 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).

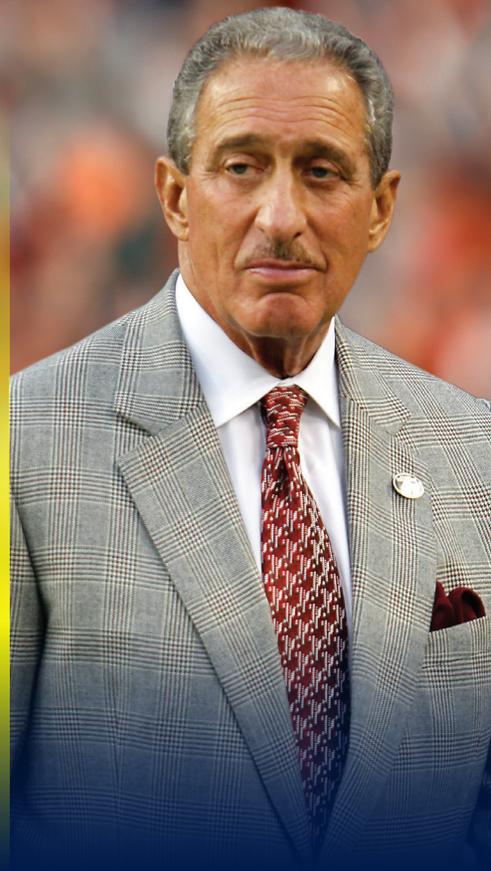
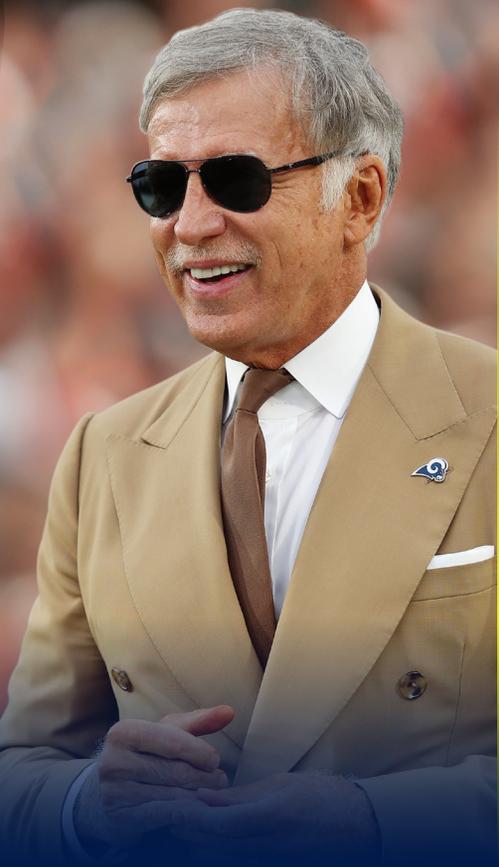
Dr. Harrison was Co-Editor of the Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics (2009-2011) housed at the University of North Carolina (Chapel-Hill). He is currently Editor of the Journal of Higher Education Athletics & Innovation housed at Oklahoma University. He also wrote and co-edited a book with 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 / Las Vegas 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 served 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. 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 (UCF). 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) and the Graziadio Business School at Pepperdine University (2018-2019). Bukstein currently serves as an Adjunct Instructor within the College of Business at the University of South Florida (2014-present) and a Lecturer at the Graduate School of Education at UCLA (2020-present). Bukstein's research focus is on the intersection of sport and the law, collective bargaining in professional sports, business analytics in sports, the business of college athletics and professional sports, 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 the sport industry. Bukstein has authored books on the business and governance of college sports, sports business analytics, collective bargaining in the NFL and NBA, and intellectual property in sports and entertainment.

Acknowledgments: A special thank you to Andrzej Karwaczynski, Makena Bement, Michael Onuchovsky, and Grant Hagen for their assistance with data collection.

Report creative design and direction by Andrzej Karwaczynski.





**DIVERSITY
& INCLUSION**