Digging Deeper: Exploring the Relationship of the Rooney Rule and Coaching Diversity in the NFL

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Abstract
This paper analyzes the relationship between the Rooney Rule and coaching diversity in the National Football League (NFL). The Rooney Rule is a policy implemented in 2003 by the NFL to address long-standing concerns over minority representation among coaches. The Rooney Rule stipulates that for every head-coaching vacancy, at least one minority candidate must be interviewed for the position. In this paper, I provide input to the research question: To what extent has the Rooney Rule improved minority representation among high-level NFL coaches? The NFL claims the Rooney Rule to be a policy success. However, existing research on the impact of the Rooney Rule suggests mixed findings. Some publications claim that performance, not race, is the primary driver for selecting coaching candidates for high-level positions. Other publications attribute all-time highs in minority Head Coaching hires almost directly to the Rooney Rule. To better understand the Rooney Rule's effectiveness, I conducted comparisons of minority hiring rates across two different time periods for the following three topics: the comparability of diversity improvements to the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the Major League Baseball (MLB), the disparities of racial coaching distribution by team, and the difference of hiring rates of Coordinators among white and minority Head Coaches. Informed by my research findings and discussions in existing literature, my ultimate policy recommendation for increasing diversity within the coaching ranks is to mandate expansion of the Rooney Rule to include Coordinator-level coaching positions, such that minorities are better positioned to become future Head Coaches.

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Introduction

This paper analyzes the relationship between coaching diversity in the National Football League (NFL) and the Rooney Rule. There exists a historical racial discrepancy between player and coaching demographics in the NFL. A majority of players in the league are black, while most coaches are white[1]. To address long-standing concerns over minority representation, the NFL implemented the Rooney Rule in 2003 to give minority coaches greater opportunity to become future Head Coaches. The policy does not mandate a set quota for how many minority Head Coaches must be represented throughout the 32 teams in the league. It instead stipulates that at least one racial-minority candidate must be interviewed for every Head Coaching vacancy.

Since the Rooney Rule's implementation, the proportion of minority coaches has risen. In 2002, minorities accounted for approximately 14% (13/90) of all high-level coaches (Coordinators [Offensive and Defensive only] and Head Coaches) in the league. In 2018, that figure was 20% (19/97). (To facilitate comprehension, any statistic provided without citation in this paper was derived directly from my research.) The NFL claims that mainly the Rooney Rule is responsible for continual diversity improvements among coaches. More importantly, the policy signaled an institutional change favoring prioritization of improved diversity among leadership.

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[1] Cochran, Johnnie, and Cyrus Mehri. *Black Coaches in the National Football League: Superior Performance, Inferior Opportunities*. Washington, DC: Mehri & Skalet, PLLC, 2002.

As the world's highest revenue generating sports league[2], the NFL and its policies have proven very influential. Since its implementation, large organizations external to sports have adopted similar policies to the Rooney Rule in hopes of making significant improvements to workplace diversity[3]. The reach of the Rooney Rule thus extends beyond the parameters of professional football. However, if diversity improvements in the NFL are misinterpreted or improperly attributed to the Rooney Rule, it may lead to some disappointing future outcomes for both the league and other organizations.

With this information in mind, my research question is:

To what extent has the Rooney Rule improved minority representation among high-level NFL coaches?

There has been some previous research conducted on the impact of the Rooney Rule. Existing findings suggest mixed conclusions. Some publications[4,5] claim that performance, not race, is the primary driver for selecting high-level coaching candidates for vacant Head Coaching positions. This claim asserts that the impact of the Rooney Rule is overstated, as Head Coaching hiring decisions are not heavily contingent on the factor of race. Contrastingly, other publications[6] attribute all-time highs in minority Head Coaching hires and racial convergence of performance directly to the Rooney Rule.

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[2] Kutz, Steven. "NFL Took in $13 Billion in Revenue Last Season - See How It Stacks up against Other Pro Sports Leagues." MarketWatch. July 02, 2016. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://www.marketwatch.com/story/the-nfl-made-13-billion-last-season-see-how-it-stacks-up-against-other-leagues-2016-07-01.

[3] Reid, Jason. "Rethinking The NFL's Rooney Rule For More Diversity At The Top." *FiveThirtyEight*. May 20, 2016. Accessed November 17, 2018. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/rethinking-the-nfls-rooney-rule-for-more-diversity-at-the-top/.

[4] Fee, C. Edward, Charles J. Hadlock, and Joshua R. Pierce. "Promotions in the internal and external labor market: Evidence from professional football coaching careers." *The Journal of Business* 79, no. 2 (2006): 821-850.

[5] Solow, Benjamin L., John L. Solow, and Todd B. Walker. "Moving on up: The Rooney rule and minority hiring in the NFL." *Labour Economics* 18, no. 3 (2011): 332-337.

[6] Fanning Madden, Janice, and Matthew Ruther. "Has the NFL's Rooney Rule Efforts ''Leveled the Field'' for African American Head Coach Candidates?." *Journal of sports economics* 12, no. 2 (2011): 127-142.

The goal of this paper is to provide further context to the overall discussion of evaluating the effectiveness of the Rooney Rule policy. For my research, I looked at three topics yet to be explicitly explored. These topics are:

1. How do diversity improvements in the NFL compare to Major League Baseball (MLB) and the National Basketball Association (NBA), similarly structured sports leagues that did and did not adopt similar diversity policies respectively?
2. Are there stark disparities of demographic distribution by team?
3. Are minority Head Coaches more likely than white Head Coaches to hire minority Coordinators? How does the Rooney Rule affect this finding?

The first topic helps contextualize diversity progress in the NFL post-Rooney Rule against sports organizations with similar player demographics. Comparing changes in minority hiring rates across a league which has a similar policy to the Rooney Rule (e.g. Selig Rule in the MLB) and a league that does not (e.g. the NBA) illuminates whether diversity improvements are more attributable to specific league policies or changes in society at large. The second topic helps determine whether increases in diversity post-Rooney Rule are driven by changes in only a few teams, or if the effects are more widespread. Finally, exploring the third topic helps measure the extent to which the Rooney Rule mitigated the expected disparity of minority Coordinator hiring rates between white and non-white Head Coaches.

My methodological approach was reasonably consistent. For each topic, I compared diversity hiring rates across differentiated pre-policy and post-policy periods. Pre-policy, in every case, included data up to 10 years prior to the implementation of the policy. I collected all of my data from league-sponsored or league-approved sites (see *Appendix* for data samples). For the most part, I individually catalogued and categorized every relevant coach from years 1992 to 2018, then analyzed that information to compare changes in hiring rates dependent on the factor

of race. I also utilized public reports from The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES), an organization dedicated to analyzing race and gender issues for many sports leagues through the United States, for help interpreting growth trends. A more detailed explanation is presented later in my *Methodology* section.

My overall conclusion is that while minority representation did markedly increase among high-level coaches, the improvements are not particularly significant when put into context. Concerning the first question, diversity increases only took place among organizations that instituted diversity policies (NFL and MLB). However, hiring rates for minority Head Coaches in the NBA are comparatively superior to the NFL and MLB both pre-policy and post-policy. With regards to racial hiring disparities by team, the results suggest that a concentration of minority representation among a few teams drives the average diversity improvements of the whole league. Finally, minority hiring rates differ by factor of race among Head Coaches, but only significantly at the position of Defensive Coordinator. However, the gap between white and non-white Head Coaches for minority hiring rate among Coordinator does slightly narrow post-policy.

If the NFL wants to continue to improve coaching diversity through the Rooney Rule, I believe that it should start lower in the coaching hierarchy than Head Coach. The Rooney Rule should be expanded to also include vacant Coordinator positions. This position is one-step below Head Coach, with most qualified Head Coaching candidates stemming from a pool of either Coordinators or former Head Coaches. The goal of this policy is therefore to facilitate the pipeline of putting more minority coaches in better positions to become future Head Coaches.

Background

      Critics have condemned the racial inequities among player ranks in the National Football League for quite some time; yet, in 2002, prominent civil rights lawyers Cyrus Mehri and Johnnie Cochran Jr. were among the first to criticize racial inequalities within coaching ranks. In a widely cited publication, they condemned the historical lack of racial diversity among NFL coaches. The report cited data from 1986 to 2001 which catalogued extreme discrepancies of racial representation between players and coaches[7]. Following the release of the report, the authors leveraged their public status to pressure the NFL to make immediate changes by threatening a class-action lawsuit against the league.

      All 32 teams in the league are subject to the Rooney Rule. Following the passage of the policy, the NFL partnered with the Fritz Pollard Alliance to ensure that teams abide by its rules and stipulations. Within the coaching ranks, the Rooney Rule only applies directly to Head Coaches, with the intention that a positive effect at the top of the coaching hierarchy trickles down to lower-level coaching positions. Across the league, the coaching hierarchy is relatively standardized. In rank from top-to-bottom, the coaching order is as follows: Head Coach, Coordinators (Offensive, Defensive, Special Teams), Position Coaches, Assistant Coaches.

      After the hiring rates of minority Head Coaches increased, (in 2008, the number of black Head Coaches matched an all-time high of 7 [out of 32 teams])[8], the NFL expanded the policy to include the General Manager position, a front-office equivalent to Head Coach. Additionally, discussions occurred to further expand the policy to include lower-level coaching positions such as Offensive Coordinator and Defensive Coordinator; however, such a proposal was ultimately

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[7] Cochran, Johnnie, and Cyrus Mehri. *Black Coaches in the National Football League: Superior Performance, Inferior Opportunities*. Washington, DC: Mehri & Skalet, PLLC, 2002.

[8] Proxmire, Douglass C., "Coaching Diversity: The Rooney Rule, Its Application and Ideas for Expansion" *The American Constitution Society for Law and Society*, December 2008.

rejected by the NFL in 2013[9]. The reasoning behind the rejection is that Head Coaches' freedom in selecting their staff would be limited. However, the NFL instituted a similar policy in 2016 mandating that women be interviewed for key front-office vacancies - positions which at the time consisted of about 25% women[10].

The NFL regards the Rooney Rule as a major policy success for two principal reasons[11]. Firstly, diversity among NFL coaches and front-office members has improved. From 2003 to 2018, minority hires for high-level coaches (i.e. Head Coaches & Coordinators [Offensive and Defensive only]) increased by over 150%. Secondly, the Rooney Rule does not mandate a set racial distribution at key positions, meaning that teams are not forced to hire certain minority candidates to meet a pre-determined quota. Rather, it allows for more minority candidates to get their foot-in-the-door but does not ensure that they will be hired. If teams were forced to hire certain coaches on dependent factors such as race, they might argue that this would put them at a competitive disadvantage by limiting overall choice. Some minority coaches are also categorically opposed to the idea of mandated integration, as they fear being perceived as a 'token hire' rather than having earned the position[12]. Turnover in the league is quite high due to high expectations of team performance, with many teams deciding to fire entire staffs every year. Given such high turnover and the relatively high barrier to entry, individuals generally choose to stick together in solidarity. With this in mind, if the Rooney Rule instead functioned as a mandate, it might damage these relationships by disrupting this long-standing structure.

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[9] Reid, Jason. "Rethinking The NFL's Rooney Rule For More Diversity At The Top." *FiveThirtyEight*. May 20, 2016. Accessed November 17, 2018. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/rethinking-the-nfls-rooney-rule-for-more-diversity-at-the-top/.

[10] Belson, Ken. "N.F.L. Will Require Interviews of Women for League Executive Positions." The New York Times. January 19, 2018. Accessed February 06, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/05/sports/football/nfl-women-rooney-rule-super-bowl.html.

[11] Reid, Jason. "Rethinking The NFL's Rooney Rule For More Diversity At The Top."

[12] Carpenter, Les. "Are NFL Owners Making a Mockery of the Rooney Rule?" The Guardian. January 24, 2018. Accessed February 06, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2018/jan/24/rooney-rule-black-coaches-nfl

Therefore, the Rooney Rule is appealing in the sense that its impact on diversity is still felt despite a lack of structural disruption, allowing teams to operate as they normally would. The NFL can send a signal of progressivity but simultaneously shield itself from much political dissent.

According to Cyrus Mehri[13], counsel to the Fritz Pollard Alliance (NFL partner organization which monitors racial diversity), "The Rooney Rule by any objective measure has been a tremendous success." Since 2003, the minority hiring rate among Head Coaches has averaged 20.6% (20/102), a near 13% percentage point jump compared to the average minority hiring rate of 7.6% (6/79) among Head Coaches from 1992-2002.

Figure A: Comparison of Pre-Policy & Post-Policy Minority Head Coach Hiring Rate

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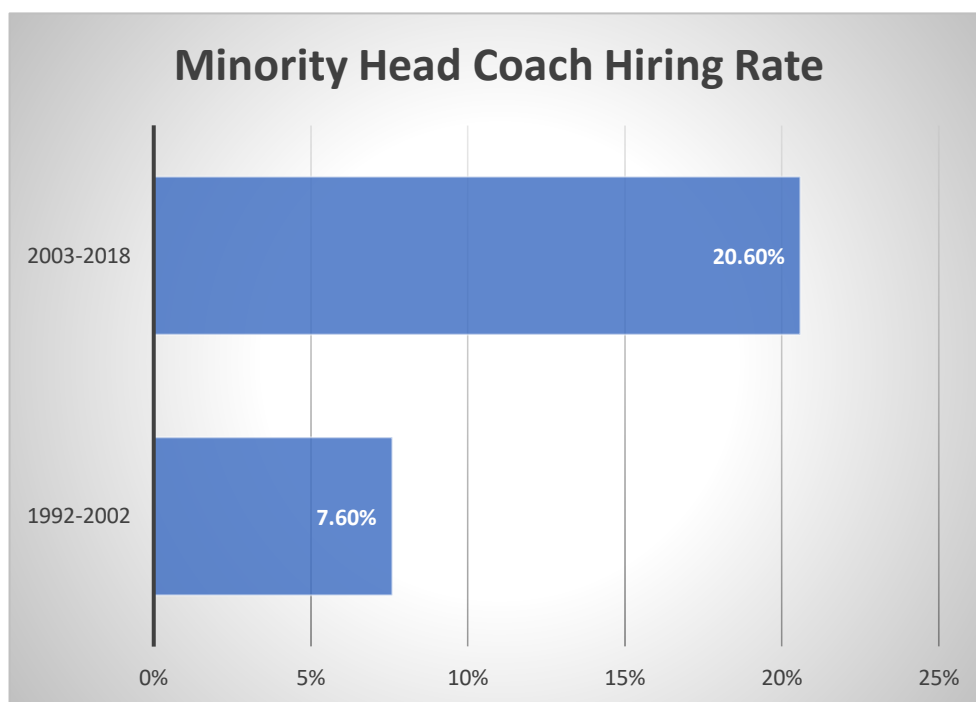
[13] League, National Football. "Impact of Rooney Rule on Minority Coaching." NFL.com History. January 28, 2011. Accessed February 24, 2019. http://www.nfl.com/videos/nfl-network-total-access/09000d5d81df5514/Impact-of-Rooney-rule-on-minority-coaching.

For the assistant coach position of Defensive Coordinator, minority hiring rates have risen almost 70% during that same period, despite the fact that the Rooney Rule pertains only to Head Coaches and does not mandate any changes to hiring practices at this position.

In 2017, the NFL received an "A rating" for its diversity hiring practices from the Institute of Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES), an organization dedicated to evaluating issues related to gender and race[14]. Each year, TIDES releases publications which grade every major US sport on their current diversity standing in accordance with a standardized Racial and Gender Report Card (RGRC). The grading scale ranges from F to A+, with diversity ratings corresponding directly to the nation's demographics. For example, to receive an A for race, the category must show 30% people of color, matching the near 35% of minorities that make up the US population. The same rule corresponds to gender evaluations as well, as an A rating necessitates above 45% representation of women (which closely mimics US population)[15]. While minorities only comprised 19% of Head Coaches, the NFL nonetheless managed to receive the highest score for its diversity contributions in other areas.

The NFL also claims that the impact of the Rooney Rule lies beyond measurable quantifiable statistics on minority hiring rates[16]. The NFL mandate of interviewing minority coaches for high-level positions encourages teams to broaden their search for candidates outside of their typical scope. While this of course means looking for more candidates of color, it may also lead to more candidates in general being exposed to further opportunities independent of

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[14] Lapchick, Richard. "The 2018 NFL Racial and Gender Report Card." ESPN. January 23, 2019. Accessed February 06, 2019. http://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/25825224/nfl-work-do-make-their-workplace-truly-diverse.
[15] "Racial & Gender Report Card." Tides. Accessed February 06, 2019. https://www.tidesport.org/racial-gender-report-card.
[16] "Impact of Rooney Rule on Minority Coaching." NFL.com. January 28, 2011. Accessed April 13, 2019. http://www.nfl.com/videos/nfl-network-total-access/09000d5d81df5514/Impact-of-Rooney-rule-on-minority-coaching.

race. Therefore, the rule benefits all unknown or inexperienced staff looking to gain exposure in the industry. Furthermore, even if a candidate is not chosen for the position, the interview process provides useful experience and instills confidence for future success.

In response to the rule's perceived success, several organizations external to sports have adopted similar Rooney Rule-like policies in hopes of improving diversity in the workplace. According to FiveThirtyEight[17], "Facebook, Pinterest, Intel, Xerox and Amazon are among the major companies that have instituted their own version of the rule. Even the Pentagon has explored using some form of the rule to diversify its officer corps." In 2017, a collective of 40 major law firms across the United States agreed to implement a more progressive version of the Rooney Rule. Called the Mansfield Rule, the policy stipulates that the candidate pool for participating firms be made up of at least 30% women or ethnic-minorities[18]. Thus, the potential impact of this Rooney Rule policy extends beyond the parameters of professional football.

Literature Review
Why Many Diversity Programs Fail

To better contextualize the potential successes and failures of the Rooney Rule, it is important to understand why diversity programs in general struggle across organizations. In 2016, Harvard Business Review published an article exploring this topic[19]. Researchers analyzed three decades' worth of data from over 800 U.S. firms and came to the following conclusions about diversity.

Firstly, programs which force-feed diversity initiatives may activate biases rather than eradicate them. Such programs may include mandatory diversity training, hiring and

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[17] Reid, Jason. "Rethinking The NFL's Rooney Rule For More Diversity At The Top."
[18] McGirt, Ellen. "How Lawyers Are Working to Change Their Industry's Diversity Problem." Fortune. Accessed February 06, 2019. http://fortune.com/2017/08/30/the-mansfield-rule-lawyers-diversity/.
[19] Kalev, Frank, Alexandra Dobbin, Joan C. Williams, and David A. Thomas. "Why Diversity Programs Fail." Harvard Business Review. 2016.   Accessed October 24, 2018

performance rating tests, and grievance systems. While such control tactics provide useful legal liability protection against lawsuits, they more often than not tend to frustrate employees and increase workplace tension. Instead, companies yield better diversity results when tactics are relaxed in favor of more focused policies like mentoring programs, targeted recruitment, and task forces. The Rooney Rule appears to fit within this framework. It is not designed to force feed diversity onto teams, but rather encourage it by mandating more thoughtful consideration of minority candidates.

Secondly, it is important to get leadership on board, with researchers suggesting three principal tools. The first pertains to engagement, where leaders are encouraged to become "diversity champions"[20] by actively seeking out ways to further educate themselves on diversity issues. As noted above, participating in company mentorship programs is a compelling example. The second relates to increasing contact between groups. The term 'groups' is intentionally broad, as it connotes anything ranging from different departments to different ethnicities; however, the crux of the idea encourages leadership to expand its reach beyond their standard correspondences. Because the Rooney Rule is especially designed with a top-down approach in mind, attaining buy-in from leadership is particularly important to increasing diversity among all coaches. If team ownership does not believe change is necessary to workplace culture, that top-level mindset will likely permeate throughout the organization.

Lastly, the report mentions social accountability. Leaders are pushed to regularly review diversity numbers to identify potential gaps and methods for improvement. If certain teams in the NFL do not recognize or acknowledge a problem with diversity, then that problem will likely never be addressed. One suggested mechanism for maintaining social accountability is to enlist

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[20] Kalev et al., "Why Diversity Programs Fail."

task forces containing members of underrepresented groups. The Fritz Pollard Alliance, an organization dedicated to evaluating enforcement of the Rooney Rule and monitoring on-going diversity efforts, currently fills this role for the NFL.

Why Have Coaching Diversity Problems in the NFL Persisted for So Long?

Struggles with diversity among players and coaches reflect the same historical problem of racial discrimination. Until the late 1940s, black players were scarce in professional football. From 1934 to 1946, there were no black players in the NFL. Quotas limiting the number of black players per team were commonplace, while many black players that did make it were often stacked into the same positions as a means for elimination[21].

Even as the NFL became racially integrated and the presence of explicit racial bias diminished, its effects are still felt on limiting minority players and coaches; an analysis of the coaching position of Offensive Coordinator yields this insight. Since 2007, 110 of 147 Offensive Coordinators hired were former college or NFL Quarterback coaches[22]. A Quarterback coach is responsible for mentoring and developing players at the Quarterback position and is the position which most likely precedes becoming Offensive Coordinator. To become a Quarterback coach, one very likely needs some experience playing Quarterback. Minority Quarterbacks are rare, a fact which some attribute to discrimination and biased beliefs about minority intelligence and leadership capabilities[23]. Even in 2013, 23 of the 32 starting quarterbacks were white. Similarly, the center position, which is the 2nd most likely position path to players become Offensive

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[21] Rhoden, William C. "At Some N.F.L. Positions, Stereotypes Reign." The New York Times. December 11, 2011. Accessed February 06, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/12/sports/football/at-some-nfl-positions-stereotypes-reign.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

[22] Newman, Kyle, and Patrick Saunders. "Climbing a Slippery Mountain: Why NFL's Black Offensive Coaches Struggle to Become a Head Coach, Coordinator." The Denver Post. September 11, 2017. Accessed February 06, 2019. https://www.denverpost.com/2017/09/11/nfl-black-coaches/.

[23] Johnson, Martenzie. "Deshaun Watson and the Intellect of Black Quarterbacks." The Undefeated. November 13, 2018. Accessed February 24, 2019. https://theundefeated.com/features/deshaun-watson-and-the-intellect-of-black-quarterbacks/.

Coordinator, is currently 82% white. Among the 37 Offensive Coordinators that were not former quarterback coaches, only 8 of them were black. Further, only 5 out of 110 former quarterback coaches were black, with 3 of the 5 being repeat minority hires[24].

The example of Offensive Coordinator is illustrative of a cyclical positive feedback loop occurring amongst NFL coaches and staff. Because minority players and coaches have been historically limited to non-leadership positions such as Quarterback and Center, not many minorities receive future opportunities to move up the coaching ladder. Not only does a dearth of high-level minority coaches impact current generations, but future ones as well. There is a lack of examples and mentorship opportunities for young minority players and coaches to aspire to become. Therefore, not many minority players end up in positions such as quarterback or center, and the cycle begins again. Additionally, while the prevalence of black quarterbacks has risen significantly in recent years[25], the corresponding increase of black offensive coaches is subject to a potential time-lag due to lack of supply from previous generations. This problem in the NFL is parallel to what is called the 'pipeline problem' in research on diversity more generally[26]. For example, it is hard to change the percentage of minorities at the top of a company without first addressing the percentage of minorities at lower levels (fixing the pipeline). This is of course an over-simplified explanation of the phenomena, as other factors are important, but it is nonetheless a fairly representative example of the larger problem.

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[24] Newman and Saunders. "Climbing a Slippery Mountain: Why NFL's Black Offensive Coaches Struggle to Become a Head Coach, Coordinator."

[25] Jones, Bomani. "Kaepernick Sacrificed His Career - What More Do People Want?" The Undefeated. February 20, 2019. Accessed March 03, 2019. http://theundefeated.com/features/kaepernick-sacrificed-his-career-what-more-do-people-want/.

[26] Ragins, Belle Rose, Bickley Townsend, and Mary Mattis. "Gender gap in the executive suite: CEOs and female executives report on breaking the glass ceiling." Academy of Management Perspectives 12, no. 1 (1998): 28-42.

What Matters When Hiring Head Coaches?

In reviewing existing literature on this subject, two conclusions stood out. The first conclusion is that to become an NFL head coach, it is practically necessary first to become a Coordinator. Among observed Head Coaching hires from 1985 to 2012, 70% were promoted from a Coordinator position, while an additional combined 27% were former assistant Head Coaches or previous NFL Head Coaches[27]. It is extremely tough to make the direct leap from position coach (a position one step below Coordinator) to Head Coach, as only 16% of Head Coaches hired over that same time period were able to do so. One publication utilizing Head Coach data from 1970 to 2001 suggests an interesting correlation of performance to the likelihood of promotion[28]. They conclude that the likelihood of external promotion is strongly linked to individual performance and weakly linked to team performance, while the opposite finding is said to be true of internal promotion. Another paper analyzing the history of minority hiring in the NFL similarly suggests that the crux of the Head Coaching diversity problem stems from a lack of development of minority assistant coaches[29].

The second conclusion involves the matter of how these coordinators are promoted to Head Coach. Consistent with historical trends of racial discrimination, research suggests that white position coaches are more than twice as likely to be promoted to coordinator than their black counterparts[30]. Even after the implementation of the Rooney Rule, white assistant coaches continued to be promoted at higher rates than similarly-performing minorities[31]. Other research

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[27] Rider, Christopher I., James Wade, Anand Swaminathan, and Andreas Schwab. "Racial disparity in leadership: Performance-reward bias in promotions of national football league coaches." (2016).

[28] Fee, C. Edward, Charles J. Hadlock, and Joshua R. Pierce. "Promotions in the internal and external labor market: Evidence from professional football coaching careers." *The Journal of Business* 79, no. 2 (2006): 821-850.

[29] Solow, Benjamin L., John L. Solow, and Todd B. Walker. "Moving on up: The Rooney rule and minority hiring in the NFL." *Labour Economics* 18, no. 3 (2011): 332-337.

[30] Rider et al., "Racial disparity in leadership: Performance-reward bias in promotions of national football league coaches."

[31] Rider, et al. "Racial disparity in leadership: Performance-reward bias in promotions of national football league coaches."

looking specifically at professional baseball suggests that former black and white players of comparable skill sets have the same probability of coaching. However, the report also notes that many high-level black players are discouraged from coaching when they otherwise would have likely coached. This phenomenon is referred to as the "crowding out effect"[32].

One publication[33] suggests that general differences in changes of diversity levels between players and coaches are due to a difference in market saturation. Turnover between players and coaches is similarly high, and both markets are highly competitive. However, there are less available positions for coaches. Coaches also tend to have a longer life cycle than players because they are constantly recycled from team to team. In other words, coaching positions are highly replaceable, but individual coaches are not due to low exit rate and high barrier to entry.

When dealing with the racial integration of coaches, evidence suggests that individual leadership preferences matter in addition to social pressures over time. Longer-tenured owners, for example, are less likely to hire black Head Coaches[34]. Regarding promotion from lower-level positions to Coordinator, researchers claim that the white advantage is largely attributable to *performance-reward bias*, with white coaches often given preference because they have a more detailed history of success than minorities[35]. Geographic racial demographics and per capita income tend to factor into leadership's decision-making as well, as cities with higher incomes and lower percentage of black people make it less likely that a black Head Coach is hired[36].

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[32] Singell Jr, Larry D. "Baseball-specific human capital: why good but not great players are more likely to coach in the Major Leagues." *Southern Economic Journal* (1991): 77-86.

[33] Goff, Brian L., and Robert D. Tollison. "Racial integration of coaching: Evidence from the NFL." *Journal of Sports Economics* 10, no. 2 (2009): 127-140.

[34] Goff, Brian L., and Robert D. Tollison. "Racial integration of coaching: Evidence from the NFL." *Journal of Sports Economics* 10, no. 2 (2009): 127-140.

[35] Rider et al. "Racial disparity in leadership: Performance-reward bias in promotions of national football league coaches."

[36] Goff and Tollison. "Racial integration of coaching: Evidence from the NFL."

One additional reason for comparable racial differences in promotion rates pertains to the hiring process itself. According to the NFL, the nature of the hiring process for coaches and front-office members is dynamic and rushed. Once a prior season ends, teams rush to pursue the most talented and qualified candidates[37]. The process is extremely competitive, so teams often narrow their focus on a select group of individuals that they see best fit. Consequently, leadership often prefers hiring familiar candidates that they already trust. However, gaining trust requires experience, and experience requires opportunity. Further, opportunity requires familiarity and comfortability, which begets an unfortunate cycle that is not to the historical benefit of minority coaches. In sum, while the Rooney Rule could encourage NFL leadership to hire more minority candidates, the dynamic nature of the hiring process incentivizes teams to not go against the norm.

The prevalence of these roadblocks has subsequently influenced how improvements to diversity in sports are measured, as will be discussed further in the following sections. These limitations are built into judgments of progress (specifically pertaining to evaluations of the Rooney Rule's effectiveness), with any progress often considered to be good progress for the NFL.

Leveling the Playing Field: Impact of the Rooney Rule Thus Far

Thus far, conclusions on the Rooney Rule's impact on minority representation are mixed. Extreme pessimists claim that there is no evidence that the Rooney Rule has increased the number of minority Head Coaches. One group of researchers concluded that conditional on a coach reaching coordinator status, race does not influence Head Coach hiring decisions for

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[37] Duru, N. Jeremi. *Advancing the Ball: Race, Reformation, and the Quest for Equal Coaching Opportunity in the NFL.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

teams[38]. Considering that Coordinators and former Head Coaches are generally the only candidates considered for Head Coaching vacancies, this finding asserts that the Rooney Rule is functionally useless. Others claim that hiring results are indeed mixed. While the number of minority NFL Head Coaches has increased, a wide disparity still remains between the percentage of minority players and the percentage of minority Head Coaches. Furthermore, since reaching an all-time high of 7 minority Head Coaches (out of 32 teams) in 2006, growth has been relatively stagnant[39].

Other researchers take a much more optimistic viewpoint on the policy's impact. One study concludes that the Rooney Rule has likely eliminated disadvantages faced by black candidates[40]. The authors cite converging performance rates (as dictated by team winning percentage) between minorities and whites as their main evidence, claiming that minority coaches are no longer held to higher expectations and provided shorter leashes than their white counterparts. Other researchers note that the Rooney Rule has reduced unconscious biases among leadership and equivalent coaching cohorts by serving as a signaling mechanism for teams to focus more on diversity[41].

Proposed Extensions to the Rooney Rule

Even among those that believe that the impact of the Rooney Rule has thus far been positive, there is a general consensus that much work still needs to be done to bridge the diversity gap. Many researchers are hesitant that the Rooney Rule is inherently capable of doing so, citing two fatal flaws. Firstly, there is a general temptation to substitute sham interviews in

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[38] Solow, Benjamin L., John L. Solow, and Todd B. Walker. "Moving on up: The Rooney rule and minority hiring in the NFL." *Labour Economics* 18, no. 3 (2011): 332-337.

[39] Proxmire, Douglass C., "Coaching Diversity: The Rooney Rule, Its Application and Ideas for Expansion" *The American Constitution Society for Law and Society*, December 2008.

[40] Fanning Madden, Janice, and Matthew Ruther. "Has the NFL's Rooney Rule Efforts ''Leveled the Field'' for African American Head Coach Candidates?." *Journal of sports economics* 12, no. 2 (2011): 127-142.

[41] Proxmire, Douglass C., "Coaching Diversity: The Rooney Rule, Its Application and Ideas for Expansion"

place of a dedicated search for improving diversity. According to Jason Reid of FiveThirtyEight, "Sham interviews are unfortunately integral to the league's culture."[42] One commonly referenced example is the 2003 hiring of Detroit Lions Head Coach Steve Mariucci, where the team effectively circumvented the Rooney Rule by conducting a sham internal interview of a minority position coach only after the position had been filled[43]. The Detroit Lions claim that they had to act fast in order to prevent interest from other teams in Coach Mariucci, but this example is nonetheless a common tactic leadership may use to skirt around the policy. To minimize the likelihood of sham interviews, researchers suggest harsher punishment mechanisms for guilty offenders and increased vigilance of monitoring agencies such as the Fritz Pollard Alliance[44].

The second problem pertains to the fact that coordinator-level positions, which lie directly below Head Coach, are not subject to the Rooney Rule. More minority Coordinators practically mean more minorities in the applicant pool for Head Coaching positions[45]. Unfortunately, the NFL rejected a 2013 proposal requiring the inclusion of Coordinators under the Rooney Rule, instead opting to restart its Career Development Symposium. The Symposium was re-created to forge mentorship and networking opportunities for all young coaches, which adheres to useful diversity tactics offered by Harvard Business Review that was discussed in a previous section[46]. According to Jason Reid of The Undefeated[47],

"The commissioner's office requested that teams send two representatives, including at least one person of color, who aspire to be general managers and head coaches, to a three-day program at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Besides networking with decision-makers from throughout the league, participants honed their interview skills through presentations and panel discussions."

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[42] Reid, Jason. "Rethinking The NFL's Rooney Rule For More Diversity At The Top." *FiveThirtyEight*. May 20, 2016. Accessed November 17, 2018.

[43] Proxmire, Douglass C., "Coaching Diversity: The Rooney Rule, Its Application and Ideas for Expansion"

[44] Reid, Jason. "Rethinking The NFL's Rooney Rule For More Diversity At The Top."

[45] Reid, Jason. "Rethinking The NFL's Rooney Rule For More Diversity At The Top."

[46] Kalev et al., "Why Diversity Programs Fail."

[47] Reid, Jason. "Rethinking The NFL's Rooney Rule For More Diversity At The Top."

Considering that Head Coaches historically have been given the discretion to select their staff, it is understandable why the amendment was rejected. However, similar to the selection of the Head Coaches, the Rooney Rule would not mandate that Head Coaches hire more minority Coordinators. It is instead a mechanism of encouragement for diversity and inclusive thinking, perhaps even allowing more candidates than previously thought to be eligible for Coordinating opportunities.

In sum, conclusions thus far are mixed. It is therefore important to provide further clarity and context to the subject. With this in mind, the main goal of my research is to add to the overall discussion of the Rooney Rule and coaching diversity in the NFL by exploring three previously uninvestigated topics.

Methodology

My methodological approach was relatively standard for all three topics. The general idea was to compare diversity hiring rates across two different time-periods. For each topic, I gathered data from either league-approved or league-sponsored sites. Then, I conducted calculations of respective diversity changes on the dependent variable of race. The following sections provide deeper insights into my approach.

Comparing NFL Diversity Improvements Against MLB and NBA

Before digging deeper into trickle-down effects or team-specific impact, I wanted to contextualize the NFL's coaching diversity improvements by comparing results against the MLB and the NBA. All three sports league have higher rates of minority representation among players than United States' population averages (30.8%)[48]. As of 2018, the MLB contains the lowest percentage of minority players at 42.5%, while the NFL and the NBA have minority player

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[48] "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: UNITED STATES." Census Bureau QuickFacts. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/geo/chart/US/RHI125217.

representations of 72.6% and 80.7% respectively[49]. These player distributions have also

remained fairly constant over the past 30 years.

Prior to the implementation of the Rooney Rule in 2003, the MLB introduced the Selig

Rule in 1999[50]. The purpose of the policy was similar to the Rooney Rule. The goal was to

improve minority representation at key high-level managerial (the baseball equivalent of 'Head

Coach') positions. However, the Selig Rule did not mandate that teams interview at least one

minority candidate for vacancies. It merely stipulated that teams consider a diverse slate of

candidates[51]. As proof of consideration, teams must provide the MLB commissioner's (head of

the league) office with a list of all individuals internally considered for the job. The NBA, on the

other hand, has instituted no such comparable diversity policy to the Rooney Rule or the Selig

Rule.

By comparing the evolution of minority representation across all three sports leagues, the

intention was to correlatively infer whether NFL coaching diversity improvements are more

attributable to specific policy changes or changes in society at large. Taking into consideration

each league's relative player demographics, I compared racial representation across all three

leagues pre-policy and post-policy. I considered pre-policy up to 10 years before the policy's

implementation. For example, since the Selig Rule was introduced in 1999, pre-policy data

consisted of hires from 1989 to 1999. Post-policy evaluations remain from the year of policy

implementation to 2018. Since the NBA did not institute a comparable diversity policy, I

matched their pre-policy and post-policy dates to that of the NFL. For every relevant coach or

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[49] Racial & Gender Report Card." Tides. Accessed February 06, 2019. https://www.tidesport.org/racial-gender-report-card.

[50] "MLB Retains Korn Ferry to Assist in Interview Processes." MLB.com. Accessed February 06, 2019. https://www.mlb.com/news/mlb-retains-korn-ferry-to-assist-in-interview-processes/c-142927550.

[51] Grow, Nathaniel. "MLB Announces New Minority Hiring Initiative." FanGraphs Baseball. August 17, 2015. Accessed February 06, 2019. https://blogs.fangraphs.com/mlb-announces-new-minority-hiring-initiative/.

manager, I coded their race (see *Appendix* for data samples). The only races represented among individuals across all three leagues were: W = White, B = Black, H = Hispanic, A = Asian. I considered every non-white race to be a racial minority.

To conduct my calculations, I divided the quantity of minority Head Coaches or Managers by the total quantity, then multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. In measuring the MLB post-policy, for instance, I divided the 25 minority Managers listed by the total amount of MLB managers listed (91) to ultimately get a minority representation of 27.5%. I repeated the same procedure for all respective categories.

Measuring Disparities of Racial Coaching Distributions by Team

For this topic, I wanted to determine the extent to which hiring trends for high-level minority coaches varied across all 32 teams. Publications by Goff & Tollison (2009) and Brown et al. (1991) state that regional factors such as per capita income, racial demographics, and local fanbase demographics have an effect on the pace of player integration. With this in mind, I reasoned that improved diversity results may be concentrated among a particular set of teams, thereby overstating the average impact of improved diversity for the whole league. If this reasoning proved true, then potential confounding factors external to the Rooney Rule likely warrant future investigation. Alternatively, if many teams fail to demonstrate pre-policy to post-policy changes, one may infer that the Rooney Rule did not send a strong enough signal of encouraging holistic league-wide change.

Using the data repository pro-football-reference.com, I catalogued every Head Coach and Coordinator (Offensive Coordinator [OC] and Defensive Coordinator [DC] only) hire for each team for every year proceeding the implementation of the Rooney Rule. Because the Rooney Rule did not expand to include General Manager (GM) and other equivalent front-office positions until 2009, I chose not to include them in my research. I also decided not to include the

Coordinator position of Special Teams Coordinator, as not all teams consistently listed or filled this position. Although OC and DC are not directly subject to the Rooney Rule, the inclusion of diversity statistics from these positions considers the trickle-down effect of the policy on other high-level coaching positions. Every relevant position was recorded from the year 2003, or the year the Rooney Rule was initially implemented, onward to 2018 (see *Appendix,* Figure I for data sample). However, for Head Coaches hired before 2003 yet coached beyond that date (for that same team), I decided not to include them in post-policy calculations since their hires were not subject to the Rooney Rule. I repeated the same process for each team of all relevant hires 10 years prior to the implementation of the Rooney Rule, or from years 1992 to 2002 (see *Appendix*, Figure J for data sample). Additionally, for each individual listed, I also included their requisite tenure for position served in terms of years with each team.

Determining the racial background for every coach was sometimes difficult to decipher. At times, it was listed directly on the verifiable site pro-football-reference.com. However, for a majority of the persons listed, I had to individually verify their race by researching their name through the search engine Google. This was the unfortunate case for about half of the near thousand names included. While this approach certainly had its flaws, I believe it yielded a relatively accurate approximation for race.

After cataloguing all relevant data, I calculated the percentage of minority and white candidates for each position of each team. I then compared pre-policy and post-policy diversity rates for each team. For example, the Denver Broncos have hired five Head Coaches since 2003, but only one was a minority (Vance Joseph, 2017). Therefore, the percentage of minority Head Coaches hired over that time period was 20%. Finally, I compared this percentage against their rate of minority Head Coaches hired between 1992 and 2002, which in this case happens to be

0% (or 0 out of 2). I repeated this same procedure for each position of each team, then analyzed the results in aggregate after finishing each calculation.

Comparing Hiring Rates of Assistant Minority Coaches by Factor of Race Among Head Coaches

For this question, I sought to determine whether minority Head Coaches hire minority Coordinators (or the positions directly below Head Coach on the coaching hierarchy) more frequently on average than their white Head Coaching counterparts. One 2003 study examining same-race relations among first-year MBA students found that racially underrepresented groups tend to provide strong mutual support for each other in socially disadvantageous circumstances[52]. Due to lack of minority representation in coaching, I reasoned that minorities who make it to the highest-level would make a more considerable effort to support those facing similar disadvantages. More specifically, I wanted to measure the difference in hiring rate trends by comparing pre-policy results to post-policy results following the implementation of the Rooney Rule.

My methodological approach was very similar to previous sections. For pre-policy statistics, I included data up to the 10 years before the policy's implementation, or from 1992 to 2002 (see *Appendix*, Figure K for data sample). One problem that I encountered while recording names was the overlap of Head Coach's tenure across pre-policy and post-policy. The overlap of the Head Coach itself was not an issue for answering this question, but the Coordinator listing was. For example, Head Coach Andy Reid of the Philadelphia Eagles was hired in 1999, but his tenure with the team lasted through 2012. During that time, Reid brought on multiple OCs and DCs, making the decision of where to include them (pre-policy or post-policy) difficult. I

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[52] Mollica, Kelly A., Barbara Gray, and Linda K. Trevino. "Racial homophily and its persistence in newcomers' social networks." *Organization Science* 14, no. 2 (2003): 123-136.

ultimately divided Reid's tenure into two timelines: pre-policy and post-policy. For all

coordinators hired before 2003, I included them in the pre-policy data. For all coordinators hired

from 2003 to Reid's final year of 2012, I included them in post-policy data.

Finally, I calculated the rates at which white and minority Head Coaches hired minority

Coordinators. For example, when looking at DC hires among white Head Coaches post-policy, I

divided the number of minorities hired (30) by the total DCs hired during that time (143). I then

multiplied that number by 100 to get a minority hiring rate percentage of 20.4%. I repeated this

same procedure for the rest of the coaching positions listed.

Presentation of Findings

Comparing Diversity Improvements Against MLB and NBA

Before explaining my results, it is important to first contextualize diversity improvements

by reporting demographic base-rates across leagues. For example, a 15% minority hiring rate for

Head Coaches is proportionally more significant in a sports league whose player make-up is 30%

non-white than a sports league whose player make-up is 80% non-white. Figure B provides

information on player make-up on the factor of race. While the NFL and the NBA have similar

racial demographics among players, the MLB exhibits much lower minority player

representation. This difference must be acknowledged when evaluating relative improvements in

minority representation. It is also useful to understand how much this player make-up has

changed over time, hence the inclusion of 2004 data. Although I would have preferred to utilize

player data dating further back in time, I wanted to be consistent in drawing my player

demographic data from a singular source. I gathered this information via yearly reports from the

organization TIDES. The earliest available report on player demographics was from 2004, so

that is the earliest date that was referenced.

Figure B: Percentage of Minority Players in the NFL, NBA, and MLB (Data Courtesy of TIDES)
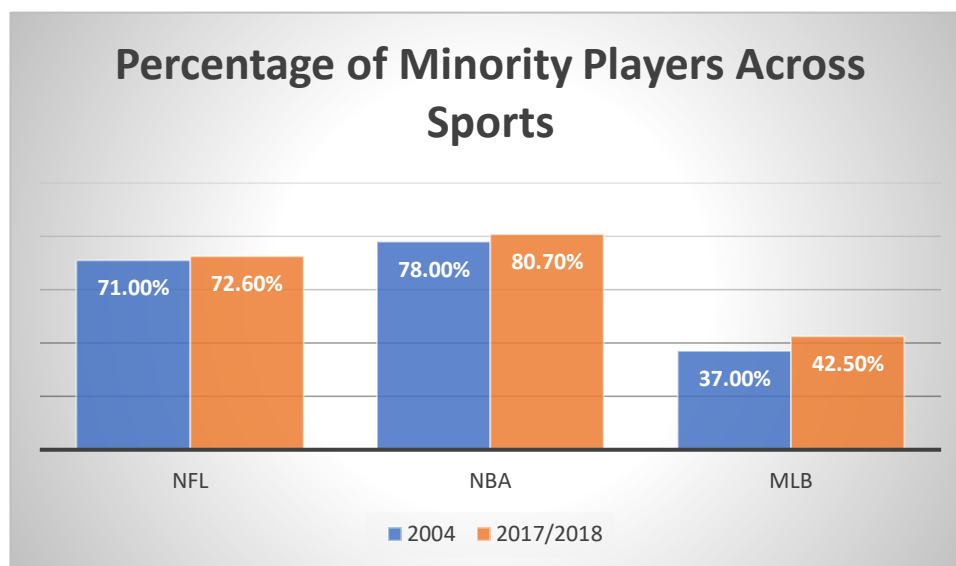
When comparing pre-policy to post-policy, both the MLB and the NFL exhibited relatively substantial increases in Head Coaching and Manager hiring rates. Figure C illustrates the change in minority hiring rates for Head Coaches (NBA and NFL) and Managers (MLB) pre-policy and post-policy for all three leagues. Given the implementations of the Selig Rule (1999) and Rooney Rule (2003), the respective increases in the MLB and the NFL are not overly surprising. However, considering different player demographics, diversity improvements in the MLB are much more impressive than in the NFL. The NFL also has a very similar player make-up to the NBA, yet it is lagging over 20 percentage points behind the NBA in terms of minority Head Coaching hires. This is especially notable considering that the NBA never introduced a comparable diversity policy to the NFL or the MLB. Contrastingly, the MLB has a current player make-up of 42.5% minorities, while its hiring rate between 1999 and 2018 is 27.4%.

Figure C: Minority Coaching Hiring Rates Across Sports Pre-Policy vs Post-Policy

Minority Coaching Hiring Rates Across Sports Pre-Policy vs Post-Policy
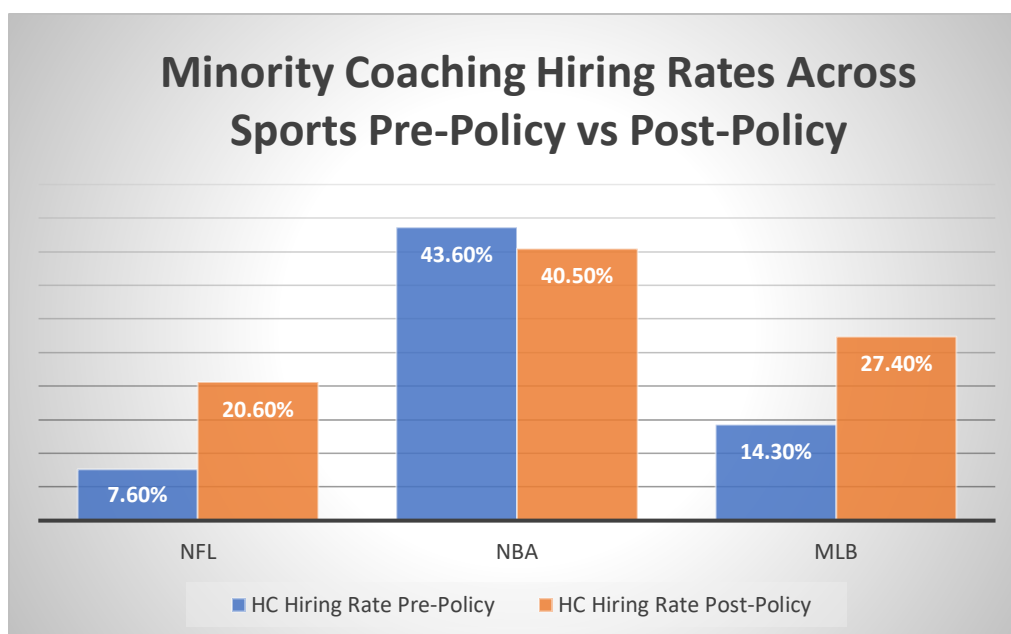
These findings do not suggest that the Rooney Rule is inherently less effective than the Selig Rule. Nor does it suggest that either rule is directly responsible for either league's respective increases in minority representation. However, it does suggest that although the NFL has increased in coaching diversity since the implementation of the Rooney Rule, it still lags far behind its league counterparts. The NBA especially appears significantly ahead for minority representation, exhibiting very similar minority hiring rates among head coaches during both periods tested. This is interesting considering that the NBA does not have a comparable diversity policy to the NFL's Rooney Rule or the MLB's Selig Rule. Most major US sports were historically subject to extreme racial discrimination among players and coaches, and the NBA is no different[53]. However, the NBA appeared to need less time to experience increased racial integration. One study conducted on the NBA found small and statistically insignificant racial

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[53] "Basketball's Battle for Racial Equality." The Undefeated. September 18, 2018. Accessed April 13, 2019. https://theundefeated.com/features/excerpt-basketball-a-love-story-battle-for-racial-equality/.

differences in annual compensation, contract-wide compensation and contract duration for Head Coaches[54]. This finding begs the following questions:

- What is the cut-off point in which these comparably high rates of minority representation decrease?
- Why did the NBA experience faster racial integration among coaches than the NFL or the MLB?

While likely beyond the scope of my research, I believe this topic warrants further study. To provide some context on the cut-off point, I looked at the racial makeup for coaches whose tenure lasted into the pre-policy measurement period (1992-2002), yet were hired before the cut-off year of 1992. Among the 37 coaches listed, only 5 of them were racial minorities, which constitutes a hiring rate of only 13.5%. Although this is a small sample size and maybe not representative of the preceding time-period, this may suggest that I missed the cut-off point by possibly only a few seasons.

Before versus After: Comparing Diversity Pre-Policy to Post-Policy by NFL Team

Figure D (shown below) details the percentage of minority coaches hired by teams post-policy, or from 2003 to 2018. As the graph shows, a few teams show a substantial minority hiring advantage over the rest. Overall, the average league-wide hiring rate for high-level minority coaches was 18.7% (91/486) post-policy. The top 5 teams listed in terms of high-level minority coaching hiring rate account for about 30% (22/91) of total minority hires, while their average minority hiring rate was 34.6% (22/65). Further, the top 10 teams in terms of high-level minority coaching hiring rate account for 52.7% (48/91) of total minority hires. These findings suggest that diversity improvements among coaches are not evenly distributed across teams.

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[54] Kahn, Lawrence M. "Race, performance, pay, and retention among National Basketball Association head coaches." *Journal of Sports Economics* 7, no. 2 (2006): 119-149.

Figure D: Percentage of Minority High-Level Coaches by Team (Post-Policy)
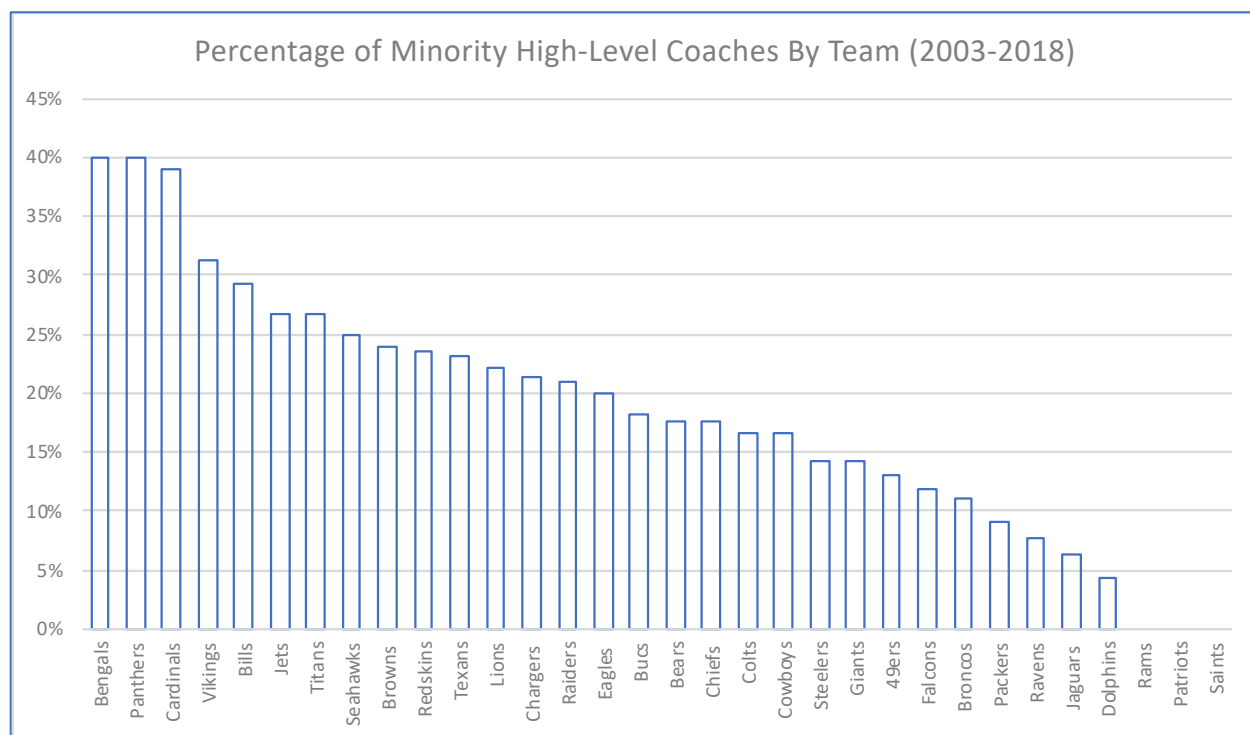
I also conducted the measurements pre-policy (or from 1992-2002). If the diversity trends present post-policy among teams were consistent pre-policy, then a causal claim for the Rooney Rule's league-wide effectiveness would be hampered. As Figure E demonstrates, diversity hires were again heavily concentrated among a few teams. The league-wide average hiring rate for high-level minority coaches was indeed lower pre-policy at 12.1% (37/305). The top 5 teams listed in terms of high-level minority coaching hiring rate account for 37.8% (14/37) of total minority hires, while their average minority hiring rate was 32.6% (14/43). Further, the top 10 teams in terms of high-level minority coaching hiring rate account for 73% (27/37) of total minority hires. 11 out of 31 teams considered (the Houston Texans did not become a franchise until 2002) did not hire any high-level minority coaches during the pre-policy period.

Figure E: Percentage Minority Coaching Hires by Team (Pre-Policy)

Percentage of Minority High-Level Coaches By Team (1992-2002)
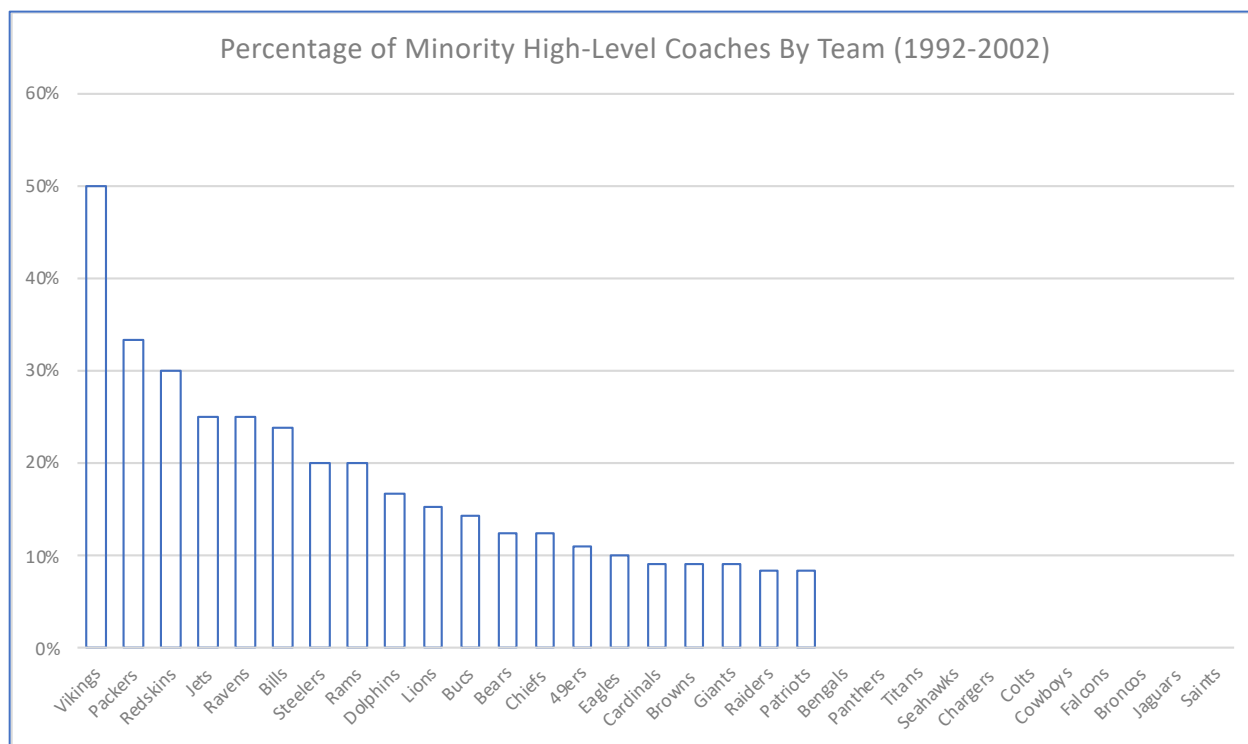
To demonstrate an overall improvement in minority hiring rate across teams, Figure F shows the percentage point difference in team minority hiring rates pre-policy to post-policy. 70.9% (22/31) of teams (excluding the Houston Texans) exhibited positive diversity improvements post-2002. While not all of the diversity improvements were substantial (say, above 15%), this does demonstrate a positive correlation between the Rooney Rule implementation and diversity improvements.

Figure F: Percentage Point Difference in Team Minority Hiring Rates Pre-policy to Post-policy

Percentage Point Difference Minority High-Level Coaches by Team Pre-Policy to Post-Policy
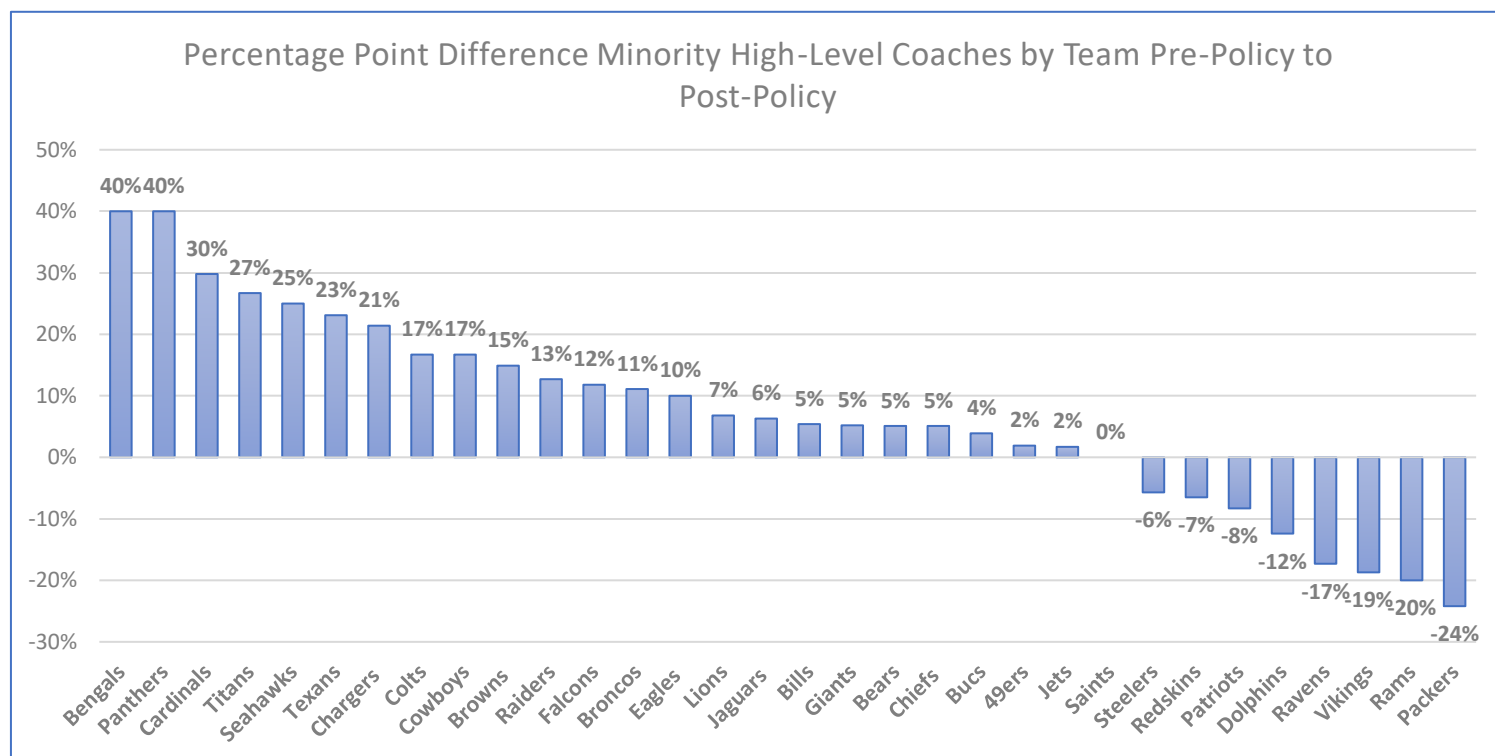
To confirm the statistical significance of a positive correlation between the Rooney Rule and coaching diversity improvements, I decided to perform a two-sample T-test to test the null hypothesis that the mean hiring rates of both periods are equal. In other words, I wanted to measure whether the average hiring rate between teams post-policy and teams pre-policy differed significantly. As Figure G shows, the *t-stat value* (~2.47) is greater than the *t critical two-tail* value (~2.00). This result implies that the difference is statistically significant.

Figure G: Two-Sample T-Test for Average Minority Representation Across Pre-Policy and Post-Policy Time Periods

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances		
	2003-2018	*1992-2002*
Mean	0.18490625	0.11359375
Variance	0.01180106	0.01496341
Observations	32	32
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	61	
t Stat	**2.46581995**	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00824881	
t Critical one-tail	1.67021948	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.01649763	
t Critical two-tail	**1.99962358**	

Note: The means shown represent the average percentage for minority hiring rate among high-level coaches across all teams, not the absolute numerical value. For example, the numerical average for minority hiring rate post-policy across all teams is 18.7% (91/486), but the mean shown above for 2003-2018 is ~18.5%.

Overall, a few conclusions are drawn from these findings. Firstly, while a concentration of minority hiring rate among a select few teams did overstate the league-wide average both pre-policy and post-policy, the overall impact was much more significant pre-policy. Secondly, the top 10 teams listed in terms of hiring rate for high-level minority coaches were not consistent across time-periods, as only 4 of them (Bills, Jets, Redskins and Vikings) were the same. Thirdly, since a majority (70.9%) demonstrated positive percentage-point increases in hiring rate for high-level minority coaches across time-periods, this implies that the Rooney Rule is positively correlated with overall league-wide diversity improvements. However, it must also be

noted that percentage-point improvements are not significant (above 15%) for a majority of teams.

Before versus After: Comparing Hiring Rates of Assistant Minority Coaches by Head Coaches

For this topic, I compared the hiring rates of minority Coordinators between white and non-white Head Coaches. I expected minority head coaches to hire minority assistants at a higher rate than white coaches, considering the lack of minority coaching representation in the first place, but I wanted to see whether the Rooney Rule had any impact in mitigating this disparity. As it turns out, hiring rates differ significantly by race among Head Coaches, but only heavily at the position of Defensive Coordinator.

Figure H: Percentage Hires of Minority Coordinators By White and Minority Head Coaches
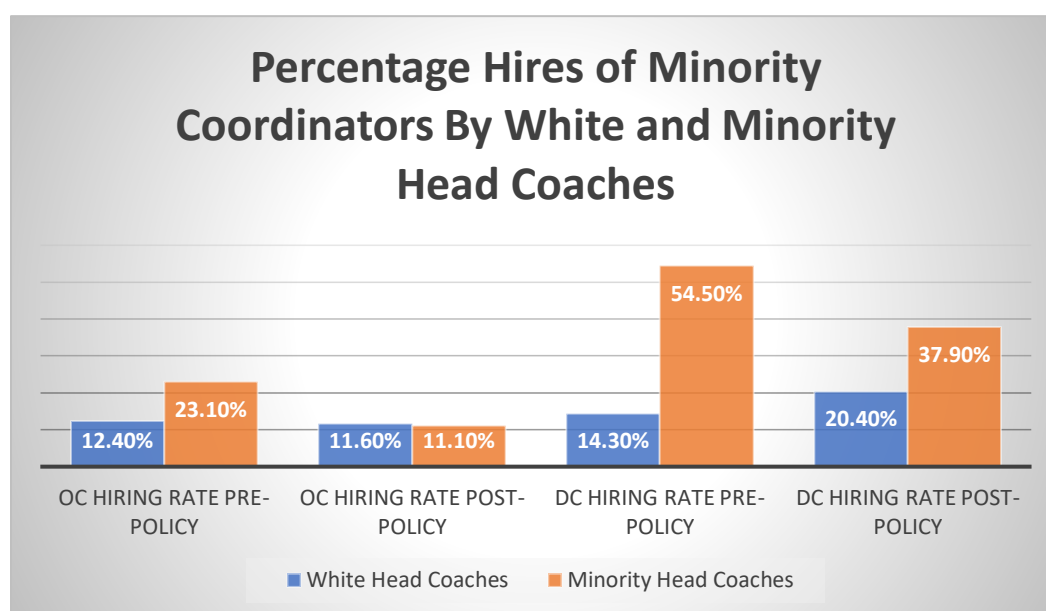
As Figure H shows, minority Head Coaches hire minority DCs at a much higher rate than do white Head Coaches across both pre-policy and post-policy periods. The difference is especially prominent pre-policy, where minority Head Coaches hire DCs at a rate 40 percentage points higher than their white counterparts. Minority Head Coaches pre-policy also hired

minority OCs at a rate approximately 11 percentage points higher than white Head Coaches. These pre-policy trends are not particularly surprising, as high-level minority coaches were reasonably rare during the pre-policy period. Therefore, it makes sense for minority Head Coaches made a more considerable effort to support coaches facing similar disadvantages.

Surprisingly, post-policy hiring rates of Offensive Coordinators are nearly identical for both white Head Coaches (11.6%) and minority Head Coaches (11.1%). As explained in the *Literature Review* section, minority OCs are fairly uncommon to begin with, so it makes sense why hiring rates for both white and non-white Head Coaches. This rationale may also explain why the disparity of minority Coordinator hiring rates pre-policy among Head Coaches is smaller for OCs (11%) than DCs (40%). Another potential argument is that minority Head Coaches during the pre-policy period faced extraordinary scrutiny and pressure by team leadership to not hire fellow minority candidates.

There is one possible limitation about the difference in sample size that may slightly skew my results. Because white Head Coaches are significantly more common than their minority counterparts both pre-policy and post-policy, explaining the results purely in terms of percentage difference may be somewhat misleading. For example, only 7 out of 78 coaches hired pre-policy are non-white. Similarly, only 20 out of 114 coaches hired post-policy are non-white. This constitutes a significant difference in sample sizes for both periods. Although this likely does not diminish the validity of the results found, it is nonetheless important to provide context to the percentages listed.

In sum, minority Head Coaches hired minority Coordinators at a higher rate than white Head Coaches both pre-policy and post-policy. While the difference in hiring rate decreased post-Rooney Rule, the change in percentage point convergence stemmed mainly from minority

Head Coaches than white Head Coaches. Even post-policy, white Head Coaches still constitute a super-majority of Head Coaches in the NFL (see Figure A). Therefore, in order for minority hiring rates among Coordinators to continually increase, trickle-down improvements must also stem from white Head Coaches.

Policy Recommendations

What are the General Implications of My Findings?

From these findings, we learned that a concentration of minority hires among a select number of teams inflates the average increase in diversity improvements across the NFL. However, the teams at the top and the bottom for minority hiring rates are not consistent, and the hiring rate for high-level coaches improved for most teams post-policy. This is a useful finding for proponents of the Rooney Rule's effectiveness, as it suggests the impact of the Rooney Rule is league-wide and not just reaching teams which were already receptive to cultural change. We also discovered that some evidence of a trickle-down effect among high-level Coordinators, but only among the Defensive Coordinator position. Further, minority hiring rates for both Coordinator positions are still considerably higher among minority Head Coaches than white Head Coaches. Finally, we learned that despite overall diversity improvements, the NFL still lags far behind its MLB and NBA counterparts in terms of overall minority representation among Head Coaches.

In sum, despite tangible post-policy improvements to high-level coaching diversity, my findings suggest that the NFL still has considerable improvements to make concerning minority representation among coaches.

Suggested Improvement to the Rooney Rule

If the NFL wants to continue to improve minority representation among high-level coaches within the framework of the Rooney Rule, it should start lower than Head Coach. My

overall policy recommendation is to expand the Rooney Rule to include Coordinators such that minority coaches have a better chance to become future Head Coaches. In 2013, the NFL did restart its Career Development Symposium designed to facilitate the pipeline for young or inexperienced coaches by forging mentorship and networking opportunities. The yearly Symposium is likely a net positive for improving minority representation, but its effects are probably not significant enough. To create a fundamental change in coaching leadership, the NFL should implement a policy that fundamentally changes the hiring process for high-level coaches.

The Rooney Rule likely played a significant role in increasing the minority Head Coach hiring rate from 7.6% (1992-2002) to 20.6% (2003-2018). However, growth has thus far been capped to about 7-8 minority Head Coaches league-wide. Assuming that teams are looking to hire the best candidate independent of race, this suggests that there are not enough qualified minority coaches for available Head Coaching vacancies. The Rooney Rule mandates that a minimum of one minority must be interviewed for every available Head Coaching position. However, if the qualified coaching pool does not contain many minority coaches, then that minimum requirement may often unfortunately represent the maximum. For example, if consistently only 1 out of 5 qualified candidates is a minority, then a minority coach on average will only be hired 20% of the time (ceteris paribus). In other words, the fact that about 80% of the Head Coaches hired post-policy are white may not be primarily due to racial discrimination, but rather due to a lack of a diverse candidate slate to choose from.

There is some concern that expanding the Rooney Rule would limit the discretion that Head Coaches currently have in constructing their own coaching staff. It is a significant reason why a 2013 proposal to expand the Rooney Rule to Coordinators was ultimately rejected.

However, similar to the selection of the Head Coaches, the Rooney Rule would not mandate that Head Coaches hire more minority Coordinators. It is instead a mechanism of encouragement for diversity and inclusive thinking, perhaps even allowing more candidates than previously thought to be eligible for coordinating opportunities. All told, expanding the Rooney Rule to include Coordinator positions would likely have a positive effect on improving minority representation among high-level coaches.

Conclusion

It is important to think about what the Rooney Rule does. The intention is to allow more minorities to get their foot-in-the-door to eventually increase minority representation. However, it is more than that. Due to its high-profile nature, it has become a signal for diversity and progressive thinking. Everyone knows about the NFL, and many know about the Rooney Rule. Due to the perceived immediate success of the Rooney Rule, many organizations external to the sports world are adopting it. This is a very critical point to make. For organizations that adopt the Rooney Rule, it sends a signal of forward-thinking and progressiveness[55].

Here are my parting thoughts on the Rooney Rule and coaching diversity in the NFL. Yes, more minority coaches are being hired post-policy. Yes, there is a small trickle-down effect from Head Coach to other high-level coaching positions. Overall, the effect appears to be positive. However, the distribution of high-level minority coaches to high-level white coaches still disproportionately favors white coaches. Further, the demographic differential between players and coaches is still staggering.

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[55] Williams, Maxine. "Building a More Diverse Facebook." Facebook Newsroom. Accessed November 17, 2018. https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2014/06/building-a-more-diverse-facebook/.

Yes, the Rooney Rule facilitates more qualified minorities to become future Head Coaches. And yes, the policy still benefits qualified minority coaches that do not get immediately hired, as it allows them to get their foot-in-the-door and receive valuable interview experience for the future. However, the NFL must also recognize that in order to continue to improve minority representation among high-level coaches, it should take necessary steps to ensure that more minority coaches are qualified to make the jump. If the NFL wants to serve as a leader for progressive thinking and workplace diversity, it should not be complacent with the growth it has already made, but think forward in identifying ways it can continue to improve.

We must critically think about what we want a policy like the Rooney Rule to signify. The original expectations for the success of the Rooney Rule should be reviewed. Considering the stark demographic difference the NFL still maintains today, is a success just an improvement on the status quo? The NFL has yet to issue a minimum threshold of success. The Rooney Rule is not designed to force integration, but instead, have the most qualified candidate get hired. Assuming that this is the case, and the best candidates are being hired to the effect of the Rooney Rule, why are not more minorities being hired? Why is the distribution still so starkly different? Are white coaches and front office managers simply more prepared for success or better at their job than minorities? Surely this should not be the case.

Although these questions are rarely publicly explored, they are questions that should be answered by the NFL and organizations which adopt similar policies. By digging deeper into the extent of efficacy of this policy and implications of future expansion, I hope to inform more insightful debate on the topic.

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Glossary of Terms

<u>Assistant Coach</u> = member of a coaching staff that serves under Head Coach

<u>Defensive Coordinator</u> = member of coaching staff that is responsible for managing the overall functions and strategy of a team's defense

<u>General Manager</u> = highest-ranking member of a team's front-office; usually responsible for player recruitment, development, trades, hiring staff to support the team, and overall management of the team

<u>Head Coach</u> = the highest-ranking position on the coaching staff; responsible for direction, instruction and training of players on the team

<u>Manager (MLB)</u> = equivalent of Head Coach (NFL); responsible for overseeing and determining on-field team strategy

<u>Offensive Coordinator</u> = member of coaching staff that is responsible for managing the functions and strategy of a team's offense

<u>Quarterback Coach</u> = a member of the offensive coaching staff that is responsible for handling the development of players at the quarterback position

<u>Racial Minority</u> = any person(s) considered to be non-white

<u>Special Teams Coordinator</u> = member of coaching staff that is responsible for supervising and directing on-field functions not directly pertaining to the Offense or Defense (e.g. kicking and punting)

<u>TIDES</u> = The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport

Appendix

<u>Figure I</u>: Sample from NFL High-Level Coaches Data Set (Post-Policy | 2003-2018)

First	Last	Position	Team	Year(s)	Race
Rick	Dennison	OC	Broncos	2015-2016	W
Dennis	Allen	HC	Raiders	2012-2014	W
Dennis	Allen	DC	Saints	2015-2018	W
Lou	Anarumo	DC	Dolphins	2015	W
Bruce	Arians	HC	Cardinals	2013-2017	W
Bruce	Arians	OC	Colts	2012	W
Bruce	Arians	OC	Steelers	2007-2011	W
Jay	Gruden	OC	Bengals	2011-2013	W
Teryl	Austin	DC	Lions	2014-2017	B
Bob	Babich	DC	Bears	2007-2009	W
Bob	Babich	DC	Jaguars	2013-2015	W
Joe	Barry	DC	Lions	2007-2008	W
Joe	Barry	DC	Redskins	2015-2016	W
Jeremy	Bates	OC	Jets	2018	W
Jim	Bates	DC	Packers	2005	W
Jeremy	Bates	OC	Seahawks	2010	W
Edgar	Bennett	OC	Packers	2015-2017	B
James	Bettcher	DC	Cardinals	2015-2017	W
James	Bettcher	DC	Giants	2018	W
Darrell	Bevell	OC	Seahawks	2011-2018	W
Darrell	Bevell	OC	Vikings	2006-2010	W
Eric	Bieniemy	OC	Chiefs	2018	W
Greg	Blache	DC	Redskins	2008-2009	B
Rob	Boras	OC	Rams	2015-2016	W
Todd	Bowles	DC	Cardinals	2013-2014	B
Todd	Bowles	DC	Eagles	2012	B
Todd	Bowles	HC	Jets	2015-2018	B

Data Source: pro-football-reference.com

Figure J: Sample from NFL High-Level Coaches Data Set (Pre-Policy | 2003-2018)

First	Last	Position	Team	Year	Race
George	Henshaw	OC	Broncos	1992	W
Jim	Fassel	OC	Giants	1992	W
Rod	Rust	DC	Giants	1992	W
Mike	Pope	OC	Bengals	1993	W
Hank	Bullough	DC	Lions	1993	W
Richie	Petitbon	HC	Redskins	1993	W
Rod	Dowhower	OC	Redskins	1993	W
Buddy	Ryan	DC	Titans	1993	W
Ray	Rhodes	DC	49ers	1994	B
Jim	Bates	DC	Falcons	1994	W
Pete	Carroll	HC	Jets	1994	W
Ray	Sherman	OC	Jets	1994	B
Greg	Robinson	DC	Jets	1994	W
Chick	Harris	OC	Rams	1994	B
Dick	Coury	OC	Titans	1994	W
Jeff	Fisher	DC	Titans	1994	W
Rick	Venturi	DC	Browns	1995	W
Rusty	Tillman	DC	Bucs	1995	W
Lindy	Infante	OC	Colts	1995	W
Joe	Haering	DC	Falcons	1995	W
Monte	Kiffin	DC	Saints	1995	W
Jim	Fassel	OC	Cardinals	1996	W
Rod	Rust	DC	Falcons	1996	W
Ron	Erhardt	OC	Jets	1996	W
Jim	Eddy	DC	Lions	1996	W
Ray	Perkins	OC	Raiders	1996	W
Rick	Venturi	HC	Saints	1996	W
Jim	Haslett	DC	Saints	1996	W
Dan	Henning	OC	Bills	1997	W
Dick	Jamieson	OC	Cardinals	1997	W

Data Source: pro-football-reference.com

Figure K: Sample from NFL Head Coach History of Coordinator Hires

First	Last	Team	Year Hired	Race	OC Race	DC Race
Dennis	Eckerson	49ers	2003	W	W	W
Mike	Nolan	49ers	2005	W	W	W
Mike	Singletary	49ers	2008	B	W	W
Jim	Harbaugh	49ers	2011	W	W	W
Jim	Tomsula	49ers	2015	W	W	W
Chip	Kelly	49ers	2016	W	B	W
Kyle	Shanahan	49ers	2016	W	B	W
Lovie	Smith	Bears	2004	B	H	W
Marc	Trestman	Bears	2013	W	W	B
John	Fox	Bears	2015	W	W	W
Matt	Nagy	Bears	2018	W	W	W

Data Source: pro-football-reference.com

Figure L: Sample from NBA Head Coaches Data Set

Name	Team(s)	Start Season	End Season	Years In Role	Position	Race
Fred Hoiberg	CHI	2015-2016	2018-2019	4	HC	W
Tyronn Lue	CLE	2015-2016	2018-2019	4	HC	B
Joe Prunty	MIL	2017-2018	2017-2018	1	HC	W
Earl Watson	PHX	2015-2016	2017-2018	3	HC	B
Jeff Hornacek	PHX, NYK	2013-2014	2017-2018	5	HC	W
Jason Kidd	BRK, MIL	2013-2014	2017-2018	5	HC	B
Frank Vogel	IND, ORL	2010-2011	2017-2018	8	HC	W
Stan Van Gundy	MIA, ORL, DET	2003-2004	2017-2018	11	HC	W
Tony Brown	BRK	2015-2016	2015-2016	1	HC	B
Kevin McHale	MIN, MIN, HOU	2004-2005	2015-2016	7	HC	W

Data Source: https://basketball.realgm.com/nba/staff-members/20/Head-Coach/Historical

Note: Team names are abbreviated (e.g. CHI = Chicago Bulls)

Figure M: Sample from MLB Managers Data Set

Manager	Years	From	To	W	L	W-L%	Race
Mike Scioscia	19	2000	2018	1650	1428	0.536	W
Clint Hurdle	16	2002	2018	1200	1253	0.489	W
Ron Gardenhire	14	2002	2018	1132	1137	0.499	W
John Gibbons	11	2004	2018	793	789	0.501	W
Bud Black	11	2007	2018	827	860	0.49	W
AJ Hinch	6	2009	2018	463	397	0.538	W
Mike Matheny	7	2012	2018	591	474	0.555	W
Bryan Price	5	2014	2018	279	387	0.419	W
Mike Shildt	1	2018	2018	41	28	0.594	W
Gabe Kapler	1	2018	2018	80	82	0.494	W
Mickey Callaway	1	2018	2018	77	85	0.475	W
Aaron Boone	1	2018	2018	100	62	0.617	W
Pete Mackanin	5	2005	2017	227	291	0.438	W
Brad Ausmus	4	2014	2017	314	332	0.486	W
Walt Weiss	4	2013	2016	283	365	0.437	W
Ryne Sandberg HOF	3	2013	2015	119	159	0.428	W
Mike Redmond	3	2013	2015	155	207	0.428	W
Matt Williams	2	2014	2015	179	145	0.552	W
Kirk Gibson	5	2010	2014	353	375	0.485	W
Tom Lawless	1	2014	2014	11	13	0.458	W

Data Source: https://www.baseball-reference.com/managers/

Note: Columns "W", "L" and "W-L%" are not practically relevant for my analysis