Judging a Book by Its Cover: Examining the Role of Race in the Intercollegiate Athletic Recruitment Process

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to empirically examine the role of race in the Division I intercollegiate recruitment process. How does a person's skin color impact whether or not he or she is recruited to play collegiate sport? Further, does the race of the coach factor into this process at all? Through in-depth qualitative interviews with 25 Division I head and assistant coaches, insight was gained into this important issue. The interview transcripts were analyzed in line with Patton's (1990) strategies for data analysis. Triangulation was employed to ensure trustworthiness of the results. The results showed that while majority of the coaches said the recruitment process was "raceless", there were some coaches who discussed this issue. Differences in the predominance of athletes of color on teams, the issue of Whiteness, stereotype threat, and stacking in the recruitment process were all explored in this study.

Keywords: NCAA, college, sport, recruitment, stereotype, race, ethnicity

1. Introduction

The Black is the better athlete, and he practices to be the better athlete, and he's bred to be the better athlete because this goes way back to the slave period. The slave owner would breed this big Black with this big Black woman so he could have a big Black kid. That's where it all started. (Uhlig, 1988, p. 47)

This statement from Jimmy Snyder, a television football analyst, echoes the belief that many Americans have regarding race and athletic ability. These stereotypes include Black athletes being naturally physically superior to White athletes and White athletes being intellectually superior to Black athletes. Do individuals who are in contact with athletes on a daily basis believe that Black athletes are physically superior to White athletes? This is especially important in collegiate athletics where coaches are recruiting athletes to participate on their teams. Are coaches recruiting athletes based upon athletic talent or racial stereotypes? Does the athletes' skill level and dedication to the sport supersede his or her race or skin color? Or is it the other way around and skin color is more important than skill level and dedication to the sport? The way coaches answer these questions can not only affect the quality of the athlete they are recruiting, but the success of the program and the future's of potential recruits as well. This paper examines the role of race in the NCAA Division I recruitment process. How does a person's skin color impact whether or not he or she is recruited to play collegiate sport? Further, does the race of the coach factor into this process at all? This study will investigate these research questions in order to gain insight into the role of race within collegiate sport recruiting.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Racial Stereotypes in Sport

Racial stereotypes are not a new phenomenon in sport. In his nature versus nurture approach, Kane (1971) argued that a form of Darwinism explained why Black athletes were physically superior. He believed that the physical demands of slavery "weeded out" individuals who did not possess the necessary physical characteristics to adapt. Because of this "weeding out" process, the average Black person was believed to be physically superior to the average White person. The stereotype of Black superiority has lingered and is still present within society. Edwards (1973) argues staunchly against the notion of natural physical superiority within Blacks. He contends that the success of Black athletes on the playing field has as much to do with intelligence and hard work as it does with physical strength. Further, Edwards argued that Kane's statement of Black's physically superiority to Whites suggests that Whites were intellectually superior to Blacks. The dangers of this type of thinking are that the accomplishments of Black athletes may be downplayed as natural and unearned; while White athletes are commended for their hard work and intellectual superiority. These stereotypes can transfer into other facets of life away from the playing field.

2.2 Stereotype Threat

Stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997) is the theory that argues that as a negative stereotype about a group becomes salient, it is used to judge performance and behavior. For example, the stereotype that "White men can't jump" may keep White athletes out of certain sports because of their perceived inability to jump or have the necessary physical characteristics to excel.

As a result, individuals may fear that they will confirm the validity of this stereotype which can lead to additional psychological stress on that person. Ironically, this additional stress can cause the person to perform below their highest ability.Steele & Aronson (1995) examined stereotype threat when investigating intelligence. When the image of innate intelligence and race was made salient in the situation of a standardized test of academic aptitude, White students performed better than their Black counterparts. However, when innate intelligence and race were not made salient, both the Black and White students performed well. The results of this study suggest that stereotype threat is real and can cause a person to not perform to their potential. Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, and Darling (1999) examined stereotype threat in sports through two experiments.

The first experiment supported the hypothesis that the salience of negative stereotypes based upon race can affect performance on a sport related task. When a golf task was framed as a way to judge sports intelligence, the Black participants performed noticeably worse than the White participants. The second experiment revealed that "White athletes themselves are aware of the stereotype about their athletic deficiencies and that this cultural belief, when made salient as a criterion for evaluation, negatively affects their performance" (p. 1223). Thus, results from this study illustrate how, when made salient, negative racial stereotypes have the ability to harm athletic performance.What happens when positive stereotypes are used? Does the belief that Black athletes are better athletes produce any positive effects? Positive stereotypes are "evaluatively favorable and seem to confer some sort of 'advantage' to members of these groups over non-members" (Czopp, 2008, p. 414). While these stereotypes can appear complimentary, they can serve to exacerbate intergroup differences and are based upon group membership and not individual information (Czopp, 2008). As a result, one group is seen as superior to another group, and individuals do not receive full credit for the skills that they have worked hard to develop.

2.3 Race on the Playing Field

Race relations can be complex, especially when there are stereotypes existing that lead one to believe incorrectly that one race is "naturally" superior to another. However, previous literature (Brown, et. al., 2003; Fordham, 1988; Hoberman, 1997) has found that there are sociological spaces, such as sport, where athletes of different races can interact without the constraints of race or racial issues. Due to the perceived lack of racial issues or constraints, the arena of sport appears to be "raceless" (Fordham, 1988). In essence, "individuals representing different races participate in integrated, organized team sports and feel committed to the role of athlete (i.e., possess a central athletic identity), some of them may become oblivious to racial division" (Brown, et. al., 2003, p. 163). Brown and colleagues (2003) conducted a study to identify the interrelationships among perceptions of discrimination and athletic and racial identity centrality. They proposed that athletic identity decreases racial identity and perceptions of discrimination. Brown et. al. found that "athletic identity and racial identity were negatively correlated among Black student athletes but, surprisingly, were positively related among White student athletes" (p. 175).

The researchers hypothesized that this result may be due to White collegiate athletes with a high athletic identity experiencing conflict because Black athletes are often viewed and discussed as being naturally, superior athletes. Finally, the researchers hypothesized that athletes with high levels of athletic identity would believe racial discrimination was no longer a problem in society. However, only the Black athletes felt this way. The purpose of this study was to examine the recruiting practices of NCAA Division I coaches. Specifically, what role does race play in the recruitment process? Does an athlete or coaches' race factor into the recruitment process? This is an important topic because issues of access to scholarships, college athletics, and a college education may be dependent upon something an athlete cannot control – his or her race.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative methodology was employed for this study. The use of interviews allowed the participants to voice their own beliefs about and experiences recruiting athletes, the culture of recruiting, and the role of race in the recruitment process. Coaches were identified and contacted to participate in an interview about the recruitment process. A purposeful sample (Patton, 2002) of Division I head coaches and assistant coaches were interviewed. Both revenue and non-revenue producing sport coaches were interviewed for this study. The rationale and strength of purposive sampling "derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. This leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the research" (Patton, 2002, p. 46).

3.2 Sample

All head coaches and assistant coaches from Division I teams were eligible to be interviewed in this study.The sports teams in this study were chosen to gain maximum variation in sport type, gender of sport, conference, and region of the country (East, Midwest, South, and West).

Maximum variation is necessary in order to have a broad sample and to avoid "one-sidedness or representation of the topic; variation of questions avoids just one answer. If researchers assume that a variable may influence the data they should implement variations" (Patton, 2002, p. 109).

3.3 Participants

In order to understand the recruitment process, 25 Division I head and assistant coaches were interviewed. Of these 25 coaches, there were 18 head coaches and seven assistant coaches from ten different athletic conferences. The coaches represented teams from 19 different American universities in California, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. Twenty-one of the coaches were male while four were female. Further, all but two of the coaches were Caucasian – the other two coaches were African American. Although low, the percentage for coaches' sex and race are both similar to the national percentages (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008; Lapchick, 2008). The years of experience among the coaches ranged from six to 34 years as a collegiate coach. In accordance with the purposive sampling technique, the researcher emailed a wide variety of coaches describing the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. The coaches who were chosen to receive the email were either nationally known coaches (i.e., they had won national championships or routinely compete for the championship in their sport) or coaches whose team was highly ranked within their conference. Sampling successful coaches was essential for this study because such coaches are likely to be more expert recruiters who enroll more talented athletes.

3.4 Instrumentation

An interview guide was constructed for this study. The questions on the interview guide were open-ended which allowed the participants to give their own opinions and answers and avoid be led to give specific answers. The interviews were in depth and examined a wide variety of topics. The interview guide consisted of 27 questions, but the number of questions for each interview varied depending on the direction of each interview and the number of probing questions used. Examples of interview questions included: What are the racial or ethnic issues or differences in recruiting? Does race play a part in how you recruit? Do you think the race of the coach influences an athlete's decision to go to a certain school? Have you seen or heard of coaches recruiting athletes differently based on their race?

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Interviews were conducted at a location convenient for the participant or over the telephone and tape-recorded. A semi-structured format (Silverman, 2001) was used to guide each interview. Interviews were conducted with the Division I coaches until data saturation was reached. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that when considering the sample size, participants should be added "to the point of redundancy…In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units; thus *redundancy* is the primary criterion" (p. 202). In this study, coaches were interviewed until no new information was being presented.

3.6 Interview Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed immediately after they concluded. Immediate transcription allowed for a more accurate recording of the data. It also allowed for preliminary analysis of the transcript before conducting the next interview. There were three individuals involved in the data analysis of the transcripts. Triangulation between the research team was used in order "to increase the accuracy and credibility of findings" (Patton, 2002, p. 93). The methodological strategy of triangulating analysts involves "having two or more persons independently analyze the same qualitative data and compare findings" (Patton, 2002, p. 560). This strategy was employed in order to reduce bias from the primary researcher.

The transcripts were analyzed in accordance with Patton's (1990) strategies for data analysis. First, the transcripts were reviewed to ensure that they were complete and there was no missing data. Next, content analysis occurred, which is "the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 1990, p. 381). Transcripts were coded by writing key words in the margins. Inductive analysis occurred next, which included identifying themes within the transcript and then comparing and contrasting those themes in the other transcripts. By identifying the themes that were repeated in the transcripts, the researcher was able to determine where the coaches are identifying the athletes they recruit, the recruiting practices they use, and the recruitment process in general. The process of identifying and constructing themes continued until all the raw themes were combined to form the main themes.

3.7 Critical Theory

Critical theory guided the analysis of this study. This theory was developed due to the belief by some scholars that societies are complex organizations and it is not possible to offer a general explanation about social life using existing theory (Kellner, 1990). Instead of focusing on society as a whole, critical theory examines the

"diversity, complexity, contradictions, and changes that characterize social life as it is lived and experienced by people who interact with one another and struggle over how to organize their lives together" (Coakley, 2007, p. 41). Further, Kellner (1990) argues that "critical theory frequently shows the relationships between ideas and theoretical positions and their social environment, and thus attempts to contextualize or historicize ideas in terms of their roots within social processes" (p. 21). Critical theory contends "that one needs a theory of society grounded in a theory of capitalism to make sense of sociohistorical processes and developments because the dynamics of capitalism play such a constitutive role in social life" (Kellner, 1990, p. 22). Through a critical lens, theorists have been able to examine sports in the attempt to understand how people and societies develop and maintain cultural ideologies that are used to explain the world around them. Using critical theory is necessary in order to examine what is happening in society and not accept the status quo.

4. Results

Does an athlete's skin color impact how he or she is recruited? Many of the coaches in this study did not perceive any racial or ethnic issues in recruiting. Mostly these coaches felt that the issue of race was nonexistent within collegiate athletics. However, there were some coaches that would speak about this sensitive subject. The coaches who did talk about the role of race/ethnicity in the recruitment process discussed racial differences and how the race of a coach could impact recruiting.

4.1 Racial/Ethnic Differences

Some of the coaches who chose to discuss racial issues or differences in recruiting stated they thought there was a lack of racial diversity in their sport. Gymnastics Coach 1, a female coach of a "Big Time" conference team, felt that there were racial differences when recruiting minority athletes. She stated:

> I think you have to realize there are differences between a Black athlete and an Asian athlete just with cultural differences, and to be honest with you the number of Black athletes are limited. We as a coaching staff like to have diversity on our team, so we do our best to try to make that happen, but again we have to do what is best for our program.

Men's and Women's Swimming Coach 1, a White, male coach in his mid-30's, also experienced coaching a sport with a "limited" number of minority athletes to choose from in recruiting. He thought that the absence of racial diversity was due to the low number of minority athletes who participate in his sport. He stated:

> In general there aren't that many minorities that swim...there are some speckled throughout the community and things like that, but most of the people that we are going to recruit are going to be Caucasian. Not because of any racist thing but because there's that's the mass populace. I would say at [name of university] for us we have a pretty unique team, as far as, I'm concerned. Here we have a Black diver and two Black swimmers, an Asian swimmer…I would say several people that are from foreign countries…so it's real diverse.

Men's and Women's Swimming Coach 1 did not believe that he or his fellow coaches were being racist by recruiting predominantly Caucasian swimmers. In his opinion, the lack of racial diversity was due to fewer minorities participating in the sport. Baseball Coach 1, a White, male coach in his mid-30's, offered a different opinion for the low number of minority athletes on his team. He believed it was hard to recruit minority athletes to a team that currently had little racial diversity. He commented:

> We have a couple minorities on our team, but the biggest thing is if you do, you know, bring a student athlete in and they see a whole White team, and they might not feel too good. But besides that, I haven't really seen much of a racial difference. Except for that, it's tough when you bring a kid in and you have a whole White team.

Baseball Coach 1 had trouble recruiting minority athletes to his team because the team was not racially diverse; however, this was not true for all coaches. Men's and Women's Track and Field Coach 1, a White, male coach in his early 30's, described his team as being very racially diverse. He attributed the racial diversity of athletes to the different needs of his team. He felt that having a wide variety of events requiring different athletic abilities in his sport led to the racial diversity on the team. He believed:

> Well, in our sport, it's very diverse because we have so many different types of events. Between sprints and jumps and distance and throws, typically we'll have people from several different ethnic backgrounds. We'll have kids from inner city, we'll have kids from very 'well-to-do' families, and all joined together, over 100 and try to make them as a team. It's just unique because different events kind of require different types of abilities which, usually, you know the athletes come from different kinds of places, and you know, city kids are the fast kids and things like that.

So, we have, we've got people from 3 or 4 different countries on the team. We've got anything from African American, Asian, Caucasian, so everybody comes together and we're all in it together. We're all in it for the same reasons. So, it's just, blending together as one team.

Football Coach 1, a White, male coach in his mid-30's, felt similar to Men's and Women's Track and Field Coach 1 in that different positions required different abilities on the football field. He believed that the race of an athlete could impact whether or not a coach recruited that athlete to play a certain position. When asked the role of race or ethnic background in the recruitment process, Football Coach 1 stated:

> Football Coach 1: Oh, certainly the race of an athlete, I guess I'm not gonna say that… I'm a White guy you're gonna be really hard pressed for me to sign a White guy that's a corner, ha ha.
> Interviewer: Why is that?
> Football Coach 1: Cause White guys can't run. Ha ha. Hey. It is what it is, you know. I'm gonna have to see a legitimate track time on that dude. He's gonna have to be in like the finals of the one hundred meter dash at the state championships for me to recruit that guy. I'm gonna have to see that he runs like a 10.7 hundred electric timing, for me to recruit him as a corner. There's just no way, unless he runs that time. Because I mean there's just no White guys out there that play defense corner. I'm not a racist at all you know, I don't know if you can be racist against your own race, but, that's just a reality of mine. There's just less White guys that can run like that. That have the fluid hips in and out of breaks and so forth; I just don't think that it's very common.

Football Coach 1 commented that he felt an athlete's race could influence his athletic ability. Specifically, he felt that White athletes were not going to be as fast as Black athletes. Therefore he avoided recruiting the White athletes to positions that required a great deal of speed or fluidity in the hips. Football Coach 5, an African American, male coach, also discussed the role of race in the recruitment process for football. He believed that coaches routinely recruited Black athletes differently than they recruited White athletes. He felt that the primary difference in recruiting across race was the way coaches sold the university to the athletes, stating:

> Football Coach 5: There's no question about it. I've heard of that and, and a lot of times it, it can be an insult if you're dealing with a certain parent and your selling a particular thing about a university based on say women. Uh, there's a large population of African American student athletes and there is a large population of African American females on campus. They sell things like that which for me that's not what is important so I stay away from things like that. I really try and sell the things like you're gonna get a good education and play Division I football which is the highest level you can play. You compete against the quote BCS schools. I stay away from things like that because I feel when you start doing things like that's an insult. I don't do that but I've heard plenty of people and plenty of schools that would do that.
> Interviewer: Can you describe one of the instances that you've heard of, aside from there's girls here, that coaches have used?
>
> Football Coach 5: Uh fraternities on campus or that the general student body would be higher percentages of minorities on campus and things like that is what they sell. Even the make up of the football team can be something I've heard that people would see that you uh have more people on the team that would look like you as opposed to if you went to a place like [name of university].
> Interviewer: In your experience, do these coaches say the same things to the White student athletes?
> Football Coach 5: Oh no. I think it is totally different that way and if you recruit the White athletes you just never discuss that. Then again I think that that is not an issue for White athletes. I don't really think that that ever comes up. You just recruit them all the same. I don't see them any different that way.

Football Coach 5 felt strongly that Black athletes were recruited differently than White athletes. He believed coaches tried to sell Black athletes on their school by speaking about girls, fraternities and the racial makeup/percentages of the school; however, he did not witness coaches discussing these aspects of the school with White athletes. Unlike Football Coach 5, both Women's Soccer Coach 2 and Wrestling Coach 1 did not feel race was an issue in the recruitment process. In fact when Wrestling Coach 1 was asked if he had experienced any racial or ethnic issues or differences in the recruiting process, he responded "No, no."Although many of the coaches did not speak about or perceive any racial or ethnic issues in recruiting, most of the coaches who did discuss this issue felt that differences in recruiting were due to a lack of minorities in the sport. Further, two of the football coaches detailed how they had witnessed differences in recruiting based on race. The stereotypes that exist about Black athletes were exemplified in football recruiting.

4.2 Race of the coach

Does the color of a coach's skin impact the recruitment process? The overall consensus among coaches was that a coach's race was not the main reason an athlete would or would not choose to go to a school. However, they did feel that race could play a role in the decision.

Women's Basketball Coach 1, a White, male coach, felt that the race of a coach could impact an athlete's decision to choose school A over school B. However, he did not believe it was the primary factor. He stated:

> I believe that's possible although I don't think that is necessarily true that Black players want to play for a Black coach or a White player wants to play for a White coach. I think it's a factor but there are probably 20 factors. I'm not sure it's the most important thing. There are successful White coaches and there are successful Black coaches and they get White players and they get Black players. I would like to think there is more to it then just the color of the skin.

Football Coach 5 also felt that race was not the main factor for athletes. Although, he did feel that it may be an important aspect for parents. When asked if he thought the race of a coach could affect the recruitment process he said:

> I think so. I haven't had any personal experience with that a kid would only go because of the makeup of the coach. I have heard of certain instances where that was the case because the parents thought it was important. But we generally don't get that direct question. Now we'll say that if say for instance there is an African American student athlete and the parent may indirectly want to know "how many African American coaches do you have?" I think sometimes the parents concern with that is if my son has an issue can he come talk to you and things like that.

While Women's Basketball Coach 1 and Football Coach 5 believed that the race of a coach was not a big factor in the recruitment process, there were coaches who felt it could lead to an athlete choosing one school over another. Men's Basketball Coach 2, a White, male coach, believed that the race of the coach was important for some athletes.

> I think there is a certain portion of both White kids and Black kids who are more comfortable with a coach of the same race. I don't think there is any question about that. I have no idea what that percentage is but I'm certain that its there.

Men's Soccer Coach 1 felt that being a Black coach could be both beneficial and detrimental in the recruitment process.

> It's like a two edge sword. You can be a Black head coach thinking that you have an advantage at bringing more Black kids. That's not necessarily true. Cause a Black family can look at you, and this is harsh, but they can think well stereotypical Black guy, he might not know what he's doing. I mean there's that feeling as well.

Men's Soccer Coach 1 believed that being Black could assist him in getting minority athletes to commit to his program. However, he also felt that some families may not believe he knew what he was doing or was not as good of a coach as a White man. He stated that he felt Black families were thinking this about him, which illustrates that Black coaches have to fight against stereotypes from families and recruits of all races. It is important to note that none of the White coaches discussed having to combat perceptions that they may not know what they are doing as a coach. While majority of coaches in this study did not discuss racial or ethnic issues in recruiting, there were nine coaches that perceived this to be a factor or problem in the recruitment process. Some coaches felt that the lack of diversity in their sport contributed to the differences in recruiting. Meanwhile, two football coaches detailed their beliefs about why and how coaches recruit Black and White athletes differently. Along the same lines, majority of the coaches did not perceive the race of the coach to be a central factor in the recruitment process for the athletes. It is clear that race does play a part in the recruitment process. While it may be more pronounced in some sports, racial differences in recruiting do exist across the board.

5. Discussion

5.1 The role of Whiteness in sport

Racial and ethnic differences in the recruitment process were explored in this study. While ethnicity often refers to culture, the way the coaches in this study used it, it referred to skin color. This is an important distinction to make when examining the coaches comments. With that in mind, most of the coaches in this study did not believe race played a part in any aspect of the recruiting process. Their belief that race was not a factor in the recruitment process may have been due to the fact that they were all Caucasian coaches and they did not perceive White as a race. Whiteness, as defined by King and Springwood (2001), is:

> A practice, a social space, a subjectivity, a spectacle, an erasure, an epistemology, a strategy, an historical formation, a technology, and a tactic. Of course, it is not monolithic, but in all of its manifestations, it is unified through privilege and the power to name, to represent, and to create opportunity and deny access. (p. 160)

Thus, the coaches do not have to think about issues of race because as members of the majority, they do not have to face invisible barriers that may be in front of those of other races. Further, as coaches they had the power to decide who they were going to recruit to their team.

In essence, they are creating opportunities for some athletes while denying access for others. As White coaches, this is consistent with King and Springwood's (2001) definition of Whiteness. Dyer (1997) argues that ignoring White as a race is beneficial for those who have the power. He contends:

> As long as race is something only applied to nonwhite peoples, as long as White people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are race, we are just people. There is no more powerful position than that of being "just" human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity…The point of seeing the racing of Whites is to dislodge them/us from the position of power…by undercutting the authority with which they/we speak and act in and on the world. (Dyer, 1997, p. 1-2)

Thus, the concept of Whiteness works in U.S. society by appearing as normal and those who are "non-White" are racially marked (Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005). This can be seen within the recruitment process in that the coaches did not describe White athletes as a race – focusing only on issues of the Black athletes. This tendency to exclude White athletes from consideration implies a failure to understand White as being a race, rather than a norm. The "naturalness" of the White athlete in athletics, especially the non-revenue sports, was not even questioned by coaches in this study. Further, the coaches' beliefs that race did not impact the recruitment process is consistent with Fordham (1988) and Hoberman's (1997) theory that sport is a "raceless" space. The notion that all athletes are welcome in this space and the best athletes will rise to the top and get recruited, regardless of skin color, is consistent with the literature that assumes athletes and coaches can be "oblivious" to racial differences or divisions (Brown, et. al., 2003). Again, this is a function of Whiteness being natural and those who are privileged not having to be aware of racial differences or divisions because it does not concern them.

5.2 Diversity within sport

While the issue of race was difficult to explore because most of the coaches did not perceive race to be an issue in collegiate recruiting, nine of the 25 coaches in this study believed that race played a role in the recruitment process and shared their perceptions about the role of race. It must be noted though, that the discussions surrounding race were relegated to issues of Black and White athletes. There was not a discussion by the coaches about athletes from other minority groups. While discussing diversity and race in intercollegiate recruiting, some coaches stated that they felt there were not racial issues in their sport because there was a lack of minorities participating in the sport. Baseball Coach 1 felt that his team did not have much racial diversity because it was hard to recruit a minority athlete to an all White team. Men's and Women's Swimming Coach 1 believed the lack of diversity on his team was due to the lack of racial diversity in the sport as a whole. His perception reflects the national trends in swimming. A questionnaire was administered by USA Swimming and mailed to its members nationwide. Of the 140,000 members who identified their race in their responses, only 1% identified as African American (White, 2005). In contrast to Baseball Coach 1 and Men's and Women's Swimming Coach 1, Men's and Women's Track and Field Coach 1 believed that due to the variety of events in his sport, he was able to attract athletes of different races to his team. He believed this was a strength of his program and the diversity on his team was an asset in recruiting and competing in the sport.

5.3 Stereotype threat in recruiting and athletics

Football Coach 5, an African American man, believed that Black and White athletes were recruited differently based upon their skin color. He stated that the differences in recruitment came when the coaches were selling the university to the recruits. He recalled witnessing and hearing about other coaches attempting to sell their university by focusing on the African American girls on campus, African American fraternities, and the make up of the student body. These were things that the coaches did not address when recruiting White athletes. Football Coach 1, a White man, also agreed that race could affect the recruitment process. He stated the race of an athlete could impact whether a coach recruits an athlete to play a certain position at his university. For example, he stated he would never recruit a White cornerback to play football on his team, unless that athlete had an exceptional fast, documented 100m dash time, because he believed African American athletes were faster. Similarly, Men's and Women's Track and Field Coach 1 stated that "city kids are the fast kids." Often referring to city kids or athletes from a lower socioeconomic status is code for Black athletes.In essence, Men's and Women's Track and Field Coach 1 was saying that he recruited Black kids to run sprint/short distance events because Black athletes are faster than White athletes. The type of thinking that Football Coach 1 and Men's and Women's Track and Field Coach 1 exhibited is consistent with many of the stereotypes that exist surrounding Black and White athletes. Kane (1971) argued that the average Black athlete has greater physical athletic traits due to the transmitting of genetic material from the strongest men after decades of enslavement. Kane believed it was the passing of these traits that led to African American athletes being superior to White athletes.

Further, he suggested that White athletes were intellectually superior to Black athletes.Edwards (1973) argued against Kane's article and offered another explanation to Black athlete's athletic superiority. He stated that surviving slavery had as much to do with intellectual and strength of character as it did physical attributes. Thus, the superior intellect and character would have passed from generation to generation which would contradict the notion that White athletes are intellectually superior but would be consistent with the idea that Blacks are superior athletically to Whites. Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, and Darley (1999) contend that the "debate over the relationship between race and sports performance indicates that many people think dispositionally about what causes successful performances in sports, but the dispositions attributed to successful Black and White athletes are very different" (p. 1214). This contention explains why Black athletes are labeled as naturally gifted and athletically superior, while White athletes work hard and are intellectually superior. These labels are still present today.Even though the concept of race is not biologically valid (Omi & Winant, 1994), Football Coach 1's statements show that the contradictory views of race and athletic ability, as outlined by Kane (1971) and Edwards (1973) are still present in society. If coaches are judging athletes simply based upon the athlete's skin color, then many talented athletes may be overlooked because they are not as fast as their Black counterparts or as intelligent as their White counterparts.

Moreover, recruiting athletes for certain positions based largely upon their skin color can lead to stacking. Stacking is the process in which racially integrated teams are segregated by position. Often in football, "Whites are more likely to play on offense and at thinking and leadership positions that more often determine the game's outcome. African Americans overwhelmingly play on defense and at positions that require physical characteristics such as size, strength, speed, and quickness" (Eitzen, 2006, p. 24). While the modern day version of stacking is more subtle than in the past, it still occurs today. Coaches are not keeping African American or Caucasian athletes off of their teams. Instead they are steering them into certain positions that are in line with the racial stereotypes that accompany each race. Football Coach 1's statements about recruiting solely Black athletes to play cornerback illustrates that stacking is still occurring at least some instances within in collegiate sport. Recruiting athletes for certain positions based on race was not the only instance where race was present during the recruitment process. For some coaches, the race of the athlete could impact the selling points coaches used during the recruitment process. Football Coach 1 discussed how he changed his approach because he believed White and Black guys were interested in different things.

For instance, he mentioned discussing hunting and fishing with White athletes and African American organizations and dance clubs with the Black athletes. In addition, Football Coach 5 articulated his experiences hearing other coaches recruit athletes differently based upon race. He stated that these coaches would show the Black athletes the Black females on campus of the Black fraternities, however, these same coaches would not do that with the White athletes. This philosophy of recruiting athletes differently depending on race is dangerous and it reproduces stereotypes. By lumping all White athletes into one category and all Black athletes into another category, these coaches are saying that all White athletes enjoy the same things (i.e., hunting and fishing) and all Black athletes are the same (i.e., enjoying dance clubs and only African American organizations). By recruiting in this manner, coaches disregard individual differences in favor of skin color, and an assumption that recruits will be interested in things that are stereotypical of their race. This is another illustration of racial stereotype threat. As a matter of effectiveness, such stereotypes may also prevent coaches from developing individualized relationships with players that create rapport and improve the coach's ability to recruit.

5.4 Implications for Coaches

Some of the coaches discussed recruiting differently by race or using racial ideologies to inform their recruiting decisions. This form of recruiting can be dangerous for a variety of reasons. First, coaches may offend athletes if they change their personalities or recruiting pitch when they recruit minority athletes. Athletes may dislike coaches acting in this manner and as a result, choose to go to a different institution. Second, by recruiting athletes based on racial ideologies coaches may overlook players that would improve their team. By using "stacking" methods, they could overlook both White and Black athletes and lose those athletes to universities they compete against. Therefore, recruiting based on racial ideologies can be bad for business and may end up costing a coach his or her job. Thus it is important for universities to look past an athlete's skin color and recruit the best athlete's for a position.

5.5 Limitations

As with all research, there were limitations to this study. The first limitation was the sample in this study. There were 25 head and assistant Division I coaches in this study from 19 universities in 11 states across the country. While there was diversity in regards to gender, race, and region of the country, there were many coaches who were not interviewed for this study. Their perceptions and beliefs about the recruitment process may have been different from those interviewed for this study.

Therefore, the perceptions and beliefs about the recruitment process of those in this study cannot be generalized to represent every coach across the United States. However, the benefits of qualitative research do not depend on generalizability; it is about identifying patterns and making reasonable conclusions. Thus, this study was able to identify patterns within the recruitment process. The results in this study are based upon these patterns and provide insight to the recruitment process.There were 12 Division I sports represented in this study, there were other sports teams not included in this study. The sports that were chosen were included in order to have diversity in terms of men's sports, women's sports, revenue producing sports and non-revenue producing sports. The sports that were included represented the greatest range of diversity. However, the coaches of sports that were not included may have had different experiences or insights into the recruitment process. While the researcher expressed to each of the participants that their name and university affiliation would not appear anywhere in the dissertation or in subsequent publications, social desirability could have guided certain participant's responses to the questions. The participants might have been afraid that if their name were connected with statements about the recruitment process the university or NCAA could respond negatively.

5.6 Future Research Directions

This study provides valuable impetus for the sociological investigation of Division I intercollegiate athletics. While several questions were answered, there are still gaps that future research could examine. In order to gain another perspective of the recruitment process, it would be advantageous to follow a coach throughout the recruitment process. This could provide firsthand insight into how the coaches recruit, what is said, and any differences that exist within the recruitment process.In addition, examining what athletes think about the recruitment process would provide a different perspective of recruiting. It could also illuminate any sociocultural issues, such as race, that are occurring in the recruitment process. While coaches were vague about some of these topics, athletes may be able to provide a unique perspective.

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