

Does It Matter If Your Coach is Black or White?: An Exploration of Racial Concordance between Athletic Programs' Leaders and Student Athletes at HBCUs versus non-HBCUs

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Introduction

Racial concordance—the shared identity between a physician and a patient in terms of race. The effects of racial concordance go far beyond the doctor's office and can impact minority representation within collegiate athletics. The purpose of this study is to describe the state of racial concordance between athletic programs' leaders and student athletes. These differences will be described for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as well as non-HBCUs in the United States from 2012-2021. This is important because HBCUs are known for the education and development of minorities academically and athletically. Although these institutions cater towards these students, Black athletes might still choose to attend other institutions due to factors like resources or racial concordance.

Methods

Data was obtained from the NCAA Demographics Database including self-reported information from NCAA Sport Sponsorship and Demographic Forms by active NCAA members schools from 2012- 2021 from all divisions. The sample consisted of a measurement of each race/ethnicity for student athletes as well as the Director of Athletics, Head Coach, and Head Athletic Trainers at HBCUs and non-HBCUs. The total sample of student athletes consists of 4,797,691 students, with 154,352 hailing from HBCUs and 4,643,339 students at non-HBCUs. The total sample of Directors of Athletics consisted of 11,037 directors, 549 working at HBCUs and 10,488 working at non-HBCUs. The total sample of Head Coaches consisted of 194,530 coaches, 7,486 on staff at HBCUs and 187,044 non-HBCUs. Finally, the sample of Head Athletic Trainers consisted of 11,282 trainers, 531 working at HBCUs and 10,751 working at non-HBCUs.

Table 1. Race and Ethnicities of Head Coaches at HBCUs and non-HBCUs

Race/Ethn, Head Coach	HBCUs	Non-HBCUs
White	1,040	164,636
Black	6,135	11,251
Hispanic/Latino	65	3,919
2 or More	43	1,385
Unknown	38	1,593
Asian	30	1,738
American Indian	14	312
Native Hawaiian	1	356
International	120	1,854



Table 2. Race and Ethnicities of Student Athletes at HBCUs and non-HBCUs

Student Athletes	HBCUs	Non-HBCUs
White	12,642	3,154,256
Black	125,457	640,660
Hispanic/Latino	5,012	251,131
2 or More	3,141	158,663
Unknown	1,624	149,452
Asian	413	82,240
American Indian	177	18,157
Native Hawaiian	240	15,803
International	5,646	173,017

Results

Tables 1 compiles the race and ethnicities of athletic staff at active NCAA schools who completed the NCAA Sport Sponsorship and Demographic Forms. Table 2 summarizes the demographic characteristics of collegiate student athletes attending active NCAA schools who completed the NCAA Sport Sponsorship and Demographic Forms. The total sample of student athletes consisted of 4,797,691 students while the total sample of athletic staff consisted of 216,849 members.

There is a lack of Black leadership and a lack of “other” raced leadership in the NCAA, despite the high number of student athletes that identified in these demographic categories.

Discussion & Conclusions

Within this study, it was discovered that there is an overall lack of leadership that is representative of those that are Black or of a race other than white (especially at non-HBCUs) despite the number of students that self-reported within those categories. These findings suggest that there is a lack of racial concordance among NCAA student athletes and department leadership. Moving forward, it would be helpful to identify how these variations in race among those in leadership affect performance on and off the field as this may impact athletic performance and the overall success of a program. These findings add further evidence that increasing the racial diversity of leadership may help reduce disparities and racial discordance in collegiate athletics.

