The under-representation and experiences of elite level minority coaches in professional football in England, France and the Netherlands [presentation]

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.

Citation: BRADBURY, S., 2017. The under-representation and experiences of elite level minority coaches in professional football in England, France and the Netherlands. Presented at the European Association for Sociology of Sport Conference (EASS), Prague, Czech Republic, 14th-17th June 2017.

Additional Information:

- This is a conference presentation.

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/26802

Version: Accepted for publication

Rights: This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Please cite the published version.
The under-representation and experiences of elite level minority coaches in professional football in England, France and the Netherlands

Dr Steven Bradbury (Loughborough University, UK)

s.bradbury@lboro.ac.uk
The context

- Sport popularly perceived as a ‘post-racial’, meritocratic, egalitarian space
  - ‘Race’ no longer matters, racial inequalities a thing of the past
    - ‘evidenced’ in achievements of high profile minority sports stars

- Sport not divorced from social, cultural, political contexts
  - Reflective of and reflects back on racialized power relations
    - development, organisation, practice of sport a ‘racial formation’ (Carrington 2009)

- Sport as a site of multiple racisms and receptive to/productive of racial meanings
  - Impact of different minorities, in different ways, across different levels of sport
    - minority experiences of sports mediated by racisms (Long et al 2009, Hylton 2010)

- Relevance to professional football and ‘race’ in Western Europe
  - Minimal throughput of minority players (25%) into coaching (4%), leadership (1%)
    - minorities as ‘fit for doing’ but not ‘fit for organising’ football (Bradbury et al 2016)
The study

- **Research aims**
  - To examine the key factors which have enabled or constrained the progression of minorities across the transition from playing to coaching in the professional game
    - Processes, practices and experiences of coach education and coach employment

- **Research methods**
  - Semi-structured interviews with elite level minority coaches in England, France, Netherlands (n=40)

- **Research participants**
  - Range of diverse, but, targeted, demographic, playing, coaching backgrounds

- **Research findings**
  - Full account provided in:
The findings

1. Limited access to and negative experiences of high level coach education

Factors:

- Minorities positioned outside of ‘insider’ football networks
  - Outside employment and marginalised within culturally narrow club environments
    - Limited opportunities for identification, selection, mentoring, financial support for HLCE

- Intentional and unintentional racisms amongst coach educators and ex-players
  - Subtle, nuanced, codified racisms and racially inequitable treatment
    - Heightened cultural isolation, additional pressures: confidence, competence, acceptance

Impact:

- Slowed the pace of developmental progression of minorities
  - ‘Catch-up’ (achieving qualifications) and ‘catch 22’ (qualifications and experiences)
    - Competitive disadvantage against white peers in coaching marketplace
The findings

2. Racisms and stereotypes within the professional coaching workplace

Factors:

- Continued existence of subtle, nuanced, codified racisms
  - Inappropriate language/behaviours/interactions and racially inequitable treatment
    - Processes of racialised ‘othering’ and professional/cultural marginalisation

- Continued existence of racialised stereotypes amongst key power brokers
  - ‘Unproblematic’ transference of misplaced assumptions from playing to coaching
    - Question aspirations, attitudes, behaviours, intellect, suitability, authority, competence

Impact:

- Focus on assumed ‘racial self’ rather than actual ‘professional self’ of minorities
  - Minorities framed in terms of ‘risk’ and ‘uncertainty’ by decision makers
    - Fall back on ‘safety option’ of White coaches – cultural familiarity and social comfort
The findings

3. Over-reliance on networks based methods of coach recruitment

Factors:

- Limited operation of open, qualifications based, framework for recruitment
  - Recruitment based on personal recommendation, sponsored mobility, patronage

- Cumulative impact of stereotypes, centrality, and ‘captain to coach’ pathways
  - Opportunities to exhibit leadership skills, and build contacts with key power brokers

- Unconscious racial bias of sports media, frame appointments in ‘white’ terms
  - Focus on assumed merits of white coaches, minorities absent from narratives

Impact:

- Minorities positioned outside consciousness/preferences of key power brokers
  - Tendency to recruit ‘known’ coaches within white social/cultural insider networks
    - Minority coaches fewer opportunities, peripheral to professional coaching workplace
The conclusions

- Multifarious application and experience of racisms and racialised exclusions
  - Different racisms, different ways, different contexts, different stages of career
    - Shifting shape/scope of racisms/stereotypes, diverse cultural identities, playing histories

- Individual and systemic bias constitute a form of institutional racism
  - Mostly unintentional, unconscious, ‘embodied’, but deeply negative outcomes
    - Limiting career progression and maintaining low levels of minority coaches

- Institutional racism underpinned by hegemonic whiteness
  - Whiteness positioned as optimal status criterion in examination of ‘race’ and racism
    - Sport reflective of/reflects power relations, receptive to/productive of racial meanings
    - E.g., definitional/relational power to problematize/overlook abilities of minorities

- Power of whiteness: frames white privilege as cultural norm
  - Lack of critical self-reflection as to beneficial membership of white networks
    - Under-rep as result of societal exclusions, not everyday practices of dominant groups
    - E.g., institutionally closed recruitment practices, reproduction of racialised power relations
Thank-you for listening

Dr Steven Bradbury, Loughborough University, UK
s.bradbury@lboro.ac.uk


