



Research Paper

4th and long: National Football League Chief Diversity Officers

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ABSTRACT: The American National Football League (NFL) and its teams, some of the world's most profitable sporting properties, have a poor reputation for dealing with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This article investigated NFL teams' utilization of organization employees dedicated to DEI. Utilizing a content analysis of publicly available data, this study investigated DEI employees at NFL team organizations. The study analyzed the position's characteristics including the name of the role, the department in which it was housed, and the reporting structure. The study also examined the demographics and professional background of the employees in the roles. This study found NFL teams lag behind other American businesses in their adoption of Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) roles. As of 2021, only 25% of NFL teams had a dedicated DEI staff person. The employees filling those roles were majority women and majority Black. This article is the first to address chief diversity officer positions in the professional sport context. This study recommends NFL teams create CDO roles with appropriate reporting relationships, well-crafted position responsibilities, generous resources, and qualified and experienced employees.

KEYWORDS: National Football League, Chief Diversity Officers, diversity, equity and inclusion, DEI, diversity executives, professional sport, content analysis, organizational structure

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. National Football League

The National Football League (NFL) is clearly the most powerful organization in American sport (Crepeau, 2020) and is also "one of the most significant engines of contemporary culture" (Oates and Furness, 2014, p. 3). The NFL, one of the most popular and profitable sporting leagues, dominates American sports' viewership ratings (McGannon and Butryn, 2020; Oates and Furness, 2014). The popularity of American football, along with the massive influx of media dollars, has driven the value of individual NFL franchises to incredible heights (Crepeau, 2020). In 2019, only two of the thirty-two teams were valued at under two billion (US) dollars (Crepeau, 2020).

The NFL and its teams have struggled with issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the past including the use of racist mascots (Bruyneel, 2016), race norming (Hobson, 2021) and perpetuating discriminatory work environments (Eichhorn, 2020; Shephard, 2021). The NFL generates billions of dollars, to the benefit of its team owners, whose lack of diversity is striking, given the racial makeup of the players in the league (McGannon and Butryn, 2020). Race has long been an issue in league (Crepeau, 2020). There was not a non-white NFL team owner until 2012, and there are currently only two owners of color with major ownership interests and significant involvement in the operations of an NFL team (Lapchick, 2020). Team CEO/President positions have been predominantly held by white men (Lapchick, 2020).

Commentators have criticized the NFL's attempts to address DEI and social justice issues. However, most of the literature focuses on NFL coaches and players rather than administrative executives. Scanga (2004) identified the lack of diversity among decision makers, the absence of diversity in the final candidate choices, and the anti-tampering policy as factors facilitating and perpetuating a cycle of racial employment discrimination in the National Football League. Conlin and Emerson (2006) discovered strong evidence that non-white players face hiring discrimination in the NFL, though they are treated more equitably in retention and promotion decisions. Madden (2004) found Black coaching candidates were held to a higher standard during the

hiring process. Some investigators have found that the institution of the Rooney rule may have mitigated that discrimination (Dubois, 2016; Madden and Ruther, 2011). The Rooney rule requires NFL teams to interview at least one minority candidate for any head coaching vacancy (Dubois, 2016). However, Pitts et al. (2021) recently determined after accounting for numerous characteristics of coordinators, Black coordinators were significantly less likely than non-Black coordinators to become head coaches over the 2018-2020 seasons. This pattern is consistent with labor-market discrimination against Black coordinators in recent years (Pitts et al., 2021).

Researchers also analyzed the NFL and its teams' responses to athlete activism. Montez de Oca (2021) characterized the league's reaction to Black players' activism as contradictory attempts to appease fans and its mostly Black on-field workers. Rugg (2020) argued that the league tried to control the voice of rebellious Black players by subsuming their social justice efforts into a weak, market-friendly version of "justice" based in calls for unity. Niven (2020) found that NFL teams punished athletes who protested during games, paying them less and treating them worse than their peers.

Very recently, the public eye again focused on the NFL's treatment of DEI issues. Characterizing it as an all-too-familiar controversy, Razack and McKenzie (2021) reported on a now-former head coach's disparaging emails containing racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic content. These emails were uncovered by an independent investigation into the Washington Football Team's well-documented misogynistic and toxic culture (Shephard, 2021). Commentators noted the retrograde opinions expressed in the emails, and their wide acceptance among those with whom he shared them, illuminated the extent to which the NFL's efforts to broaden its audience are a sham (Shephard, 2021). Shephard (2021) opined these emails as evidence of "deep cultural rot at the center of the NFL and just how far the league still has to go to fix it" (para 4) and that the NFL "has no sincere interest in the changes its marketing campaign pretends to take seriously" (para 7). The NFL's "systemic and systematic protection of white men in power has bred hypocrisy, race norming, gender exclusion and violence and performative acts of solidarity with the league's majority racialized player pool" (Razack and McKenzie, 2021, para 5).

Following a summer of mass political mobilization triggered by the police murder of George Floyd, racial justice activism compelled the NFL to respond to public pressure (Montez de Oca, 2021). In 2020, as an attempt to improve DEI efforts, the NFL made enhancements to the existing Rooney Rule and extended its application from solely coaching and football operations jobs to a wide range of executive positions (Lapchick, 2020). Teams must now include people of color and/or female applicants in the interview processes for senior level front office positions such as club president and senior executives in communications, finance, human resources, legal, football operations, sales, marketing, sponsorship, information technology, and security positions. Additionally, teams that develop women or people of color to be candidates for primary football executive, general manager positions or a head coach position will earn draft pick rewards (Lapchick, 2020).

In 2020, the NFL League Office also hired Jonathan Beane as Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, highlighting the increased emphasis on continuing the League's progress when it comes to improving diversity and inclusion in its workplace and in all aspects of its business (Lapchick, 2020). The League earned an A+ rating from the 2020 Race and Gender report card for its diversity and inclusion initiatives (Lapchick, 2020).

However, even with the increased efforts at the league level, individual teams continue to struggle with DEI. Richard Lapchick (2020), Director of The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, noted the continued disparity in racial and gender hiring practices between the NFL's league office and their 32 teams. He identified a serious underrepresentation of women and people of color at the team level in positions with significant decision-making power (Lapchick, 2020). At the team level, only 13.7% of the vice presidents are people of color and only 21.1% are filled by a woman (Lapchick, 2020). By March 2022, all 32 teams are required to fully implement a DEI plan (Lapchick, 2020). One component of those plans could be dedicated DEI staff positions.

1.2. Chief Diversity Officer roles

Diversity and inclusion is a business imperative. Diversity leads to greater financial performance and drives productivity, innovation, and decision making (Good for the bottom line, 2019). The strategic diversity leadership movement has moved from a narrow focus on access and equity issues to a broader frame that addresses the rich experience of an increasingly diverse, global world. This shift requires organizations to make DEI central to their operation rather than leaving it on the margins (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). One way to accomplish that is creating staff roles dedicated to DEI.

Government entities, for-profit and non-profit corporations, and educational institutions have all created the positions, often called Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs). Local governments have been addressing equity issues by adding CDOs or staff with similar titles or focus (Kimbrough, 2017). In recent years, CDOs have assumed an increasingly vital role in higher education. Between 2000 and 2010, at least 60 of the nation's

leading College and Universities reframed their senior diversity administrative role (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013).

There has been significant progress in the creation of these roles in American business. In 2012, only 198 out of 957 (20.7%) Standard and Poor's (S&P) 500 firms had adopted CDO positions (Shi et al., 2017). In that same year, Forbes reported about 60% of Fortune 500 companies had CDOs or executive roles designated for diversity (Kwoh, 2012). As of 2021, about 53% of S&P 500 firms have a CDO position or equivalent, up from 47% in 2018 (Green, 2021). Institutional pressures, crucial stakeholders that control important resources, or internal powerful actors may motivate firms to adopt CDO positions (Shi et al., 2017). Organizations with a CDO are more likely to value diversity as a strategic asset (Shi et al. 2017).

Recently, US corporations have been setting hiring records for CDOs and large companies have poached peers for management talent in the DEI space (Green, 2021). After the mass protests in 2020, new hires of CDOs in the SandP 500 index tripled the rate of the previous 16 months, increasing to approximately a dozen each month (Green, 2021). At least 60 other publicly traded firms appointed their very first diversity leader in that time frame (Green, 2021). Bloomberg tracks diversity metrics for 100 of America's biggest corporations (Green et al., 2021). Eighty-five of the 100 have a CDO, 16 of which added or elevated the role in 2020 or 2021 (Green et al., 2021). The increase in CDOs in large American corporations demonstrates firms' commitment to workforce diversity and attests to their willingness to invest resources to accomplish it (Shi, et al., 2017).

However, even with the uptick in hires and recognition of the role's importance, turnover in the role has been high. The average tenure is 3.2 years, compared with 5.5 years for a CEO (Green, 2021). Additionally, since the adoption of the role is relatively new, though it is becoming more common, there is not a long track record of success (Marshall, 2019).

Definitions of the CDO role vary. These positions lead diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts on several fronts, internally and externally (Kimbrough, 2017). CDOs generally have hybrid job descriptions that include recruitment, human resources, marketing, ethics and legal compliance (Kwoh, 2012). CDO's primary duty is to conceptualize, define, assess, nurture and cultivate diversity (Shi, et al., 2017; Williams and Wade-Golden, 2007). CDO's develop "cultural competency and expand the social bandwidth of their respective institutions" (Wood, 2021, p. 21) The CDO also brings a new perspective to the top management team and can coordinate diversity initiatives and foster relationships with important stakeholders (Shi et al., 2017)

In a higher education context, Williams and Wade-Golden's (2013) foundational work defined a CDO as "boundary-spanning senior administrative role that prioritizes diversity-themed organizational change as a shared priority at the highest levels of leadership and governance" (Chapter 1, para. 8). Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) recommended that as the institution's highest ranking diversity administration they report to the president. The CDO's goal is to create an environment that is inclusive and excellent for all, which requires them to serve "an integrative role that coordinates, leads, enhances, and...supervises formal diversity capabilities of the institution" (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013, Chapter 1, para. 8).

CDO roles place high demands on the employees who hold them. To be effective leaders, CDOs must remain highly involved with their communities and in critical conversations, engaged on the subject matter, not defensive, and be able to hear critiques (Wood, 2021). CDOs must have a broad span of knowledge that can be leveraged in different domains, including a detailed and sensitive understanding of diversity topics across identity groups, ranging from race and ethnicity to sexuality, national origins, disability, and veteran status, among others. CDOs must also retain working knowledge of key affirmative action and federal and state policies (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). The success of the CDO depends on personal characteristics of this employee including leadership traits, ability to build networks, and understanding organizational change (Leon, 2014).

In 2012, CDOs holding these roles in Fortune 500 companies were 65% female and 37% African-American (Kwoh, 2012). Their professional backgrounds ranged from human resources and marketing to finance and operations (Kwoh, 2012; Shi et al., 2018). Approximately 25% reported directly to the CEO, while the rest answered to human resources or another department (Kwoh, 2012).

Organizational design also impacts the success of the CDO. Rank, support staff, reporting structure, and resources can support or jeopardize their work (Leon, 2014) Historically, workplace diversity has been the domain of human resource departments and managers responsible for DEI issues were considered to have few career options and negative connotations (Anand and Winter, 2008; Shi, et al., 2017). In the past, CDOs were one person, with little to no staff, resources, or direct authority (Hancock, 2018).

To set up a CDO for success, firms must make more substantial resources commitments than for the adoption of other types of diversity programs (Shi et al., 2017) Adding a CDO position to the firm's senior management team represents a significant structural change (Shi et al., 2017). Shi et al. (2017) found most CDOs either belong to the top management team, reporting to the CEO, or report to a top management team member. Creating a new senior position requires investment of people, money, and setting up priorities, goals,

channels of communication, and organizational routines that align with the rest of the organization (Shi et al., 2017).

II. METHODS

This study utilized content analysis of publicly available secondary data. Content analysis defines the process of summarizing and reporting written data (Cohen, 2018). This methodology uncovers and depicts the focus of individual, group, institutional, or social attention (Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Williams et al., 2021). Content analysis has become a popular method for qualitative and quantitative analyses in management and international business research (Gaur and Kumar, 2018). Prior studies within the sport management field have also utilized this method (Miller et al., 2019; Pedersen and Pitts, 2001; Peetz and Reams, 2011; Pitts, 2016; Williams et al., 2021).

Secondary data are a valuable and often easily accessible resource for researchers (Cohen, et al., 2018). Secondary data have considerable potential for yielding important insights and foci for research (Heaton, 2008) and provide materials for useful descriptive analysis (Cohen et al., 2018). They can be used to identify problems or areas for further research (Cohen et al., 2018).

The investigator used Google, the LinkedIn website, and each NFL team's official homepage and entered search terms "[team franchise name]" and diversity, "[team franchise name]" and equity, "[team franchise name]" and inclusion. After identification of the existence of a DEI role on the NFL team staff and the name of the person holding that position, the investigator then confirmed the role by using the person's name as a search term on LinkedIn. Utilizing the LinkedIn profile and any biographical information found through Google, the investigator coded the available information. The measures used for coding were position (job title and department), education, and prior professional background and qualifications.

The investigator also coded the photos for demographic characteristics. Visual images can be analyzed similarly to analyzing texts, for example, through 'reading' the meanings, (Cohen et al., 2018). Since these characteristics were not self-reported, the investigator was required to perceive them.

The study utilized the ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino/a/x/e or not Hispanic/Latino/a/x/e) and race (White, Black, American Indian, Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) categories as based on the US Office of Management and Budget's Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (OMH, 2018). The investigator observed socially assigned race, the racial/ethnic categorization of individuals by others (White et al., 2020). Appearance-based observed race is an external classification based solely on readily observable characteristics (Roth, 2016). This includes not only a person's phenotype but also visible status markers, clothing, hairstyle, and the context of the observation (Roth 2016). These classifications largely reflect how perceptions by the dominant or mainstream social groups (White, et al., 2020). In social research, it is typically measured by the interviewer's classification of the individual (Roth, 2016).

The investigator determined gender using phenotype and dress. "Determining gender" is the umbrella term for social practices of placing others in gender categories (Westbrook and Schilt, 2014). People present information about their gender and others then interpret this information, placing them in gender categories (Westbrook and Schilt, 2014). The process of gender determination often relies on visual and behavioral cues (Westbrook and Schilt, 2014) that relate to society's expectations of masculine versus feminine behavior and presentation (Caffrey, 2021).

Research Questions

This study investigated the NFL's use of DEI dedicated staff positions. The guiding research questions included:

- How many NFL teams have a staff position dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion?
- What are the most common organizational characteristics of those staff positions?
- What are the most common personal characteristics of the employees working in those positions?

III. FINDINGS

III.1. Results

Out of the 32 NFL franchises, only eight (25%) had identifiable DEI dedicated staff roles like a CDO. The Arizona Cardinals, Denver Broncos, Indianapolis Colts, Jacksonville Jaguars, Los Angeles Chargers, Minnesota Vikings, San Francisco 49ers, and the Seattle Seahawks created and filled CDO roles. The Jacksonville Jaguars were the only team who have two DEI dedicated positions, bringing the total number of DEI dedicated employees to nine. Five additional teams appeared to have created DEI councils utilizing employees who maintained other primary roles.

The most common position title was Director/Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, with half of teams using this language. Other position titles included Chief People Officer, Vice President of Social of Responsibility and Impact, Director of Latino/a Diversity and Cultural Affairs, and Director of Inclusion and Employee Investment. The most common department in which these positions were housed was Human

Resources (also called People and Culture) at 55.6%. Other departments represented included Marketing, Strategy, and Communications. Only two appeared to report directly to the President/CEO of the organization. Sixty-seven of the employees holding these DEI positions were Black (66.7%), 22.2% white and 11.1% Latina. Seventy-eight percent of the employees were female (77.8%), 22.2% male. Five of the nine the employees in these positions held degrees more advanced than Bachelor's degrees. Twenty-two (22.2%) percent of the group attained Ed.D degrees and there were examples of an MBA, an MSHRM, and an MS in Sports Administration. Five of the 9 (55.9%) of the employees held DEI specific training credentials, the most common of which is the University of South Florida's Corporate Training and Professional Certification Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace.

The employees in these roles illustrate two dominant pathways to CDO positions. Three of the nine had previous professional backgrounds in corporate, for-profit businesses including WalMart, Sephora, and Alaska Airlines. The other prominent path was gaining experience in higher education and intercollegiate athletics administration. Most were external hires, with only two of the nine having spent significant time with the NFL team or its associated foundation before assuming the CDO role.

III.2. Discussion

The finding that only 25% of NFL franchises have a CDO demonstrates that NFL teams are significantly behind other American businesses. Even in 2012, well before the protests following George Floyd's murder that prompted so much corporate action, about 60% of Fortune 500 companies had CDOs or equivalent (Kwoh, 2012). Almost a decade later, the NFL's teams have still not caught up to that level. That more than half of the CDO positions were housed in human resources is consistent with previous findings. Historically, human resource departments have supervised workforce diversity (Shi et al., 2017). Similarly, 75% of CDOs at Fortune 500 companies in 2012 answered to human resources or another department (Kwoh, 2012). The majority of the NFL teams' CDOs did not report directly to the president or CEO. Having a direct line to the CEO can give a CDO more power and visibility (Kwoh, 2012). Most CDOs either report to the CEO or report to a top management team member (Shi, et al., 2017). This indicates that NFL teams may not be establishing an organizational structure that will best support the CDOs work. A reporting structure that connects the CDO to the president sends a powerful message to the entire organization and allows CDOs to raise issues within the highest levels of leadership (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013).

The demographics of the employees who hold these positions did show some progress. In 2012, 65% of Fortune 500 CDOs were female, and 37% were Black (Kwoh, 2012). The NFL team's CDOs are 78% female and significantly more racially diverse, with 67% Black employees.

The educational and professional background of the NFL team's CDOs indicate that they do take the employee's qualifications seriously. Fifty-six (55.5%) percent of the employees had advanced degrees and 5 of 9 had DEI specific certifications or credentials. This is different than in the past when some organizations placed employees into the diversity role who had no previous experience, or whose careers were in decline, or someone who happened to be a visible minority with a passion for diversity (Dexter, 2010).

The NFL team's reticence in hiring CDOs may be explained by the NFL's culture and insularity. It is a league run, owned, and coached by a handful of executives which enables systemic oppression (Razack and McKenzie, 2021). Shi et al. (2017) found a strong effect of female top management team representation on firms' likelihood of adopting CDOs. At the beginning of the 2020 season there were only two women in a CEO/President position of an NFL team (Lapchick, 2020). The number of women in CEO/President positions has increased from zero in 2017 to one in 2018 and 2019 to two in 2020 (Lapchick, 2020). At the team level, only 21.1% of Vice President positions are filled by a woman (Lapchick, 2020). Therefore, the lack of diversity in top management teams may lead to a lack of will to develop and support CDOs.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

Organizations may adopt a CDO position if doing so would allow them to increase legitimacy, improve efficiency, change the corporate culture, and increase control over external resources and external actors, in response to diversity-specific pressures (Menz, 2012; Nath and Mahajan, 2008; Shi et al., 2017). The NFL is experiencing diversity-specific pressures and calls to prove that their expressed commitment to diversity and social justice is more than just lip service. Also, Shi et al. (2017) found accumulative industry adoptions impacted firms' decision to adopt CDOs. The NFL teams may feel pressure from other major American professional sports teams, like NBA teams, that are perceived as doing better in terms of diverse hiring and social justice initiatives (Butler and DeMartini, 2021; Lapchick, 2021; "NBA Leads, 2021"). Therefore, NFL teams that do not have staff dedicated to DEI should create CDO positions.

CDOs advance an organization's diversity agenda but cannot be solely responsible for transforming an organization's culture (Marshall, 2019). If firms adopt CDOs simply for impression management, it can waste resources (Shi, et al. 2017). Creating a new leadership position sends a strong signal, but it takes more than one executive to make an impact in the face of institutional pushback (Green, 2021) Therefore, these roles deserve

support from the owner and CEO/President, appropriate reporting relationships, well-crafted position responsibilities, generous resources, and talented employees.

NFL teams with current CDO positions should audit that role's reporting structure. All NFL team's CDOs should report to the President/CEO, even though the trend of developing new roles at the senior level is fairly recent (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). Allowing the CDO to report directly to the President/CEO gives credibility, indicates the value the organization places on the role, and places final accountability with the President/CEO. Businesses characterized as DEI high performers were twice as likely as low performers to report that the CEO/President is primarily responsible for DEI issues (HR Research institute, 2021). Reporting to the President/CEO, allows the CDO to strengthen alliances and networks across different levels of the organization's hierarchy (Leon, 2014). Raising the profile of the CDO reflects an organization's willingness to expose and close long-standing equity gaps (Zalaznick, 2020).

To truly shift the organization's structure and strengthen its commitment to DEI, the CDO needs to supervise other DEI staff across divisions. The development of a vertically integrated CDO division offers a powerful way of creating a more responsive organizational infrastructure by creating economic, organizational, and strategic effects (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). Diversity management has evolved out from under the traditional human resources and talent acquisition roles, to assume more dotted-line responsibilities including corporate strategy, corporate social responsibility, organizational design and effectiveness, corporate marketing and even sales (Llopis, 2011). Change rarely happens when a diversity leader is separated from other departments (Green, 2021). Since many of the NFL teams have already created diversity councils, teams could ensure that each division is represented on these councils, designate that person as the "Diversity lead" and allocate some percentage of their workload to DEI work. Then, each of these leads report to the CDO as well as their division head.

The CDOs job description should be carefully drafted. The position's designers should delineate an area of work they define as "strategic diversity leadership work" (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). Changing culture and making progress on DEI issues is not easy nor fast (Hancock, 2018). Achieving these goals requires expanding expectations for CDOs outside of tactical areas like compliance, training, problem solving, recruiting, and event planning (Hancock, 2018) CDOs must learn to play a more integral strategic role in the design of new business models, including operating more holistically in a general management and operational capacity (Llopis, 2011). Effective CDOs work to ensure that a DEI lens is rooted throughout all functional areas (internal) and the supply chain (external) (Llopis, 2011).

Once installed, diversity chiefs often face challenges such as lack of budget and direct reports (Green, 2021). NFL teams should ensure CDOs receive the support they need. Organizations must be prepared to give CDOs the resources necessary to succeed (Geisler, 2021). CDOs should be part of strategic planning and all employees should know that the CDO is a power player and not just the organization's conscience (Geisler, 2021). Fully empowering the CDO allows them to leverage diversity as an integral part of the organization's overall strategy (Shi et al., 2017).

Finding the right hire for a CDO position is difficult, because it requires a wide range of competencies (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). NFL teams should vet candidates carefully and focus the search on those who can lead and guide change. If not, the teams risk hiring employees who are underprepared for the demands of such a complex, high-profile, and politically charged position (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). When an area of responsibility becomes critically important, organizations specialists who are content experts (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). The NFL should continue the practice of external hires who have a professional background in corporate DEI.

"The development of the CDO role marks a step toward creating specialized capacity to engage in strategic diversity leadership work" (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013, Chapt2 1, para. 70). It is time for NFL teams to catch up with American businesses and truly prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion. NFL teams should add or modify existing CDO roles to ensure an organization-wide commitment.

V. CONCLUSION

The NFL and its teams, some of the world's most profitable sporting properties, have a poor reputation for dealing with issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (Bruyneel, 2016; Eichhorn, 2020; Hobson, 2021; Lapchick, 2020; McGannon and Butryn, 2020; Razack and McKenzie, 2021; Shephard, 2021). Utilizing a content analysis (Cohen, 2018), this study found NFL teams lag behind other American businesses in their adoption of CDO roles. In order to demonstrate a true commitment to improving DEI, NFL teams should create CDO roles. Those roles should include appropriate reporting relationships, well-crafted position responsibilities, generous resources, and be filled with qualified and experienced employees.

V.1. Limitations

A limitation of this study is that the investigator's perceptions of race and gender may not match a person's self-identified race (Roth, 2016) or gender. Characteristics of the observer influence how they perceive another individual's race (Feliciano, 2016). This study also relied on publicly available information which may have omitted some personnel data from NFL teams.

V.2. Future Research

Opportunities for further research include expanding the analysis to other professional sports leagues and teams. Investigators could also deploy surveys to or conduct interviews of the employees who currently hold CDO roles for NFL teams. These additional measures could explore the employees' self-identified demographic characteristics, the content of their job responsibilities, and their perceptions of how the organization values their role.

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