

SPORTS MEDIA: ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING SPORT STEREOTYPE?

A FRAME ANALYSIS OF BIG TEN SPORTS REPORTING

By Frank Lazar

Research Question

How did sports journalism coverage of football games involving Big Ten teams during the 2014 season, challenge or show racial stereotypes?

What sparked this...

Mercurio & Filak (2010) – Roughing the Passer: The Framing of Black and White Quarterbacks Prior to the NFL Draft

- “the writing patterns of these journalists are filled with stereotype of both races and are consistently used throughout the timeframe...this could lead to a continual pattern of social learning for both the public that consumes the media and for the sports journalists who continue to perpetuate the stereotypes of these athletes.”

The Problem

- **Subtle Racism**
 - Shapes:
 - People's attitudes
 - Athlete's self-opinion
 - Coaching strategies

Literature Review

- Ferruci, Tandoc, Painter and Leshner (2013)-discuss traditional racial stereotypes in sport, specifically baseball
- Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling and Darley (1999) - discuss stereotype threat on white and black athletic performance and the way the on-field ability of athletes is affected by stereotype
- Mercurio and Filak (2010) – finds journalists are in engaging in racism in NFL pre-draft coverage
- Lavelle (2010) – provides examples of the way broadcasters engage in racism in NBA commentary
- Turner and Jones (2007) U.K Sprint coaches - how coaches attitudes are affected

Literature Review

- Lavelle (2010) – provides examples of the way broadcasters engage in subtle racism in NBA commentary
- Turner and Jones (2007) U.K Sprint coaches - discuss how coaches attitudes are affected
- Eastman, Billings (2001) – looked at college basketball and how racial stereotyping has been an on-going problem

Research Method

- **Frame Analysis** of television sports reporting content of Big Ten football matchups
- **Content Analysis** conducted for sports broadcasts that display content in defined frames consistent with or in contrast with stereotypes

Defined Frames

- **White Athletes**
 - Intelligent
 - Tactical
 - Hard-Working
 - Effort
 - Active
- **Black Athletes**
 - Athletic
 - Strong
 - Speed/Fast
 - Natural
- Looking for...
 - Whether or not stereotyped framing in sports reports for white and black athletes persisted in 2014

Results

Ohio State vs. Penn State – ABC Brad Nessler/Todd Blackledge

- Consistent
 - Anthony Zettel (DT) – “Active”
 - Joey Bosa (DE) – “showed discipline”
 - Adolphus Washington (DT) and Michael Bennett (DT) – “athletic”
 - J.T. Barrett (QB), Jalin Marshall (WR), Dontre Wilson (WR) – “speed” / “very fast”
- Contrasting
 - Hackenberg (QB) – “Lazy”

Results

OSU vs. Minnesota – ABC

Dave Pasch/Brian Griese

- Consistent
 - David Cobb – “physical nature”
 - Raekwon McMillan – “with that amount of speed, and talent, and size”
 - “You don't realize how big and physical he is as a runner until you're out here, he's an enigma, he's hard to hold up, he's not that tall, but he weighs about 225 pounds” – Tom Lugenbill (Sideline Reporter)

Results

OSU vs. Michigan St – ABC Chris Fowler/Kirk Herbstreit

- Consistent
 - J.T. Barrett (QB) – “showing some physicality”, “he is a physical runner” , “natural running instincts”
 - Jeremy Langford (RB) – “physical”
 - Shalique Calhoun (DE) – “quickness”
 - Joel Heath (DT) – “he’s a big man, but has great quickness”
 - Michael Thomas (WR) – “speed”
 - Ezekiel Elliot (RB) – “quickness”
- Contrasting
 - Connor Cook (QB) – “toughness”, “deceptive athletic ability and speed”
 - Joey Bosa (DE) – “athletic ability”
 - Jack Allen (OT) – “athletic”
 - Michael Bennett (DT) – “effort and tenacious attitude”

Analysis

- There are mostly examples that are consistent with the frames
- However, there were few contrasts to the frames
- Announcers are a variable

Suggestions

- Frames need to be looked at within the **context of which they were spoken**
 - Some were used due to on-field performance
- Future research should be able to differentiate between frames used because **of in-game action and those that are pre-conceived**
- **Look at the pregame coverage**, where announcers may be more opinionated with their words

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