

Feature Articles on African Americans in *Sports Illustrated* in the 1990s

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Abstract

This descriptive study examined whether the coverage of African Americans in the feature articles in Sports Illustrated during the 1990s was representative of their participation levels. Nearly half of the articles featured European Americans; about one-third featured African Americans. More African Americans were featured in basketball, boxing, and track and field, while European Americans were featured more often in all other sports except ice hockey in which internationals predominate. The length of feature articles for African Americans was slightly longer than those for European Americans; there were more pictures in the articles about European Americans. That African Americans were not featured in articles proportionate to their participation levels in the most popular team sports could perpetuate societal perceptions of the hegemonic domination of European Americans in sports.

African Americans in the United States have been discriminated against for centuries. They have been enchained, excluded, stereotyped, and mistreated by those who perceived them as inferiors. Over time, these overt acts of degradation have been replaced by more subtle marginalization. African Americans have had to battle against the standard being European American, negative attitudes toward their ethnicity, and a lack of respect for diversity. While some have touted sport as the great social equalizer (i.e., Jackie Robinson's integration of modern professional baseball), deeply engrained biases and prejudices have dissipated slowly.

Sport has provided greater opportunities than found in some other areas within society. In the

most recent census, this country's population included 75.1% European Americans and 12.3% African Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Yet in 1999, there were 13% African Americans in Major League Baseball (MLB), 78% in the National Basketball Association (NBA), and 67% in the National Football League (NFL) (Lapchick, 2005). That the numbers for African American athletes in basketball and football were disproportionately higher in comparison with national demographics seemed to verify that the best athletes were selected for teams, regardless of their ethnicity or race.

A very different picture characterized the top management positions in the NBA, NFL, and MLB in 1999 when between 84% and 100% of these were held by European Americans (Lapchick, 2005) (see Table 1). The number of European American coaches and top administrators was much higher than national demographics. These numbers seemed to support the claim that hiring practices in professional team sports were discriminatory. That is, these teams failed to hire African Americans, especially given the number of athletes in these sports and number of former athletes who moved into coaches and management positions.

Lapchick (2005) also reported that the number of male athletes who competed within the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1999-2000 was different from the national demographics. For example, African Americans comprised 55%, 39.5%, and 6.6% of the basketball, football, and baseball teams respectively at the NCAA Division I level, while the percentages for these same teams for European Americans were 34.6%, 51.3%, and 83% respectively. Since 80%-90% of the top administrators and head

Table 1

*Ethnicity of the Top Management Personnel in Three Professional Team Sports in 1999 (data presented for teams in each league, exclusive of league offices)**

*Lapchick, R. (2005). *2004 Racial and Gender Report Card: Major League Baseball; National*

Professional League	European American	African American	Latino	Asian American
Major League Baseball				
• CEO/President	100%	0%	0%	0%
• General Manager/Director of Player Personnel	100%	0%	0%	0%
• Vice Presidents	92%	5%	2%	1.6%
National Basketball Association				
• CEO/President	90%	10%	0%	0%
• General Manager/Director of Player Personnel	84%	16%	0%	0%
• Vice Presidents	89%	10%	1%	0%
National Football Association				
• CEO/President	100%	0%	0%	0%
• General Manager/Director of Player Personnel	87%	13%	0%	0%
• Vice Presidents	92%	8%	0%	0%

Basketball Association; National Football League.

coaches in intercollegiate athletics were European Americans, it could be argued that European Americans primarily hired individuals who looked like them.

Given the popularity of professional and collegiate football, basketball, and baseball and the greater number of African Americans competing at the top levels in these sports, it could be assumed the sports magazines would highlight their achievements in numbers proportionate to their presence in these sports. It would logically follow that coverage in the top sports magazine, *Sports Illustrated*, would favor African Americans. In an analysis of the first 34 years of feature articles in *Sports Illustrated*, however, Lumpkin and Williams (1991) reported that European Americans were much more likely (over 75%) to be the focus of articles in this magazine. Would the lack of coverage in this magazine proportionate to the participation levels of African Americans in sport support the accusation that they have been marginalized?

Many people including some ethnic minorities state that a person's color is irrelevant, i.e., they support a race-neutral approach to societal issues, including within sport. It could be, however, that this claim of color blindness is really a camouflage for the continuation of privilege by European Americans. Hughes (2004) advanced the premise that sport has perpetuated disparities based on race even though many European Americans in sport claimed that they were colorblind. By claiming that racism was a thing of the past, were these individuals identifying with and reinforcing the values of the normative race?

Critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1996) states that race is the most important social construct in examining issues of people in society. Tate (1997), in defining the elements of critical race theory, concluded that racism was endemic and culturally ingrained in the United States, including in sport. For example, throughout the 1990s, most professional and collegiate teams had no coaches or top administrators of color despite accusations of prejudicial hiring practices; seldom

was any legal action taken to address this disparate treatment.

D'Souza (1995) and West (2001) have argued that the ideological hegemony of European Americans has enabled them to dominate other racial and ethnic groups. Singer (2005) stated that the attitudes, beliefs, and values of European Americans remained the norms or standards against which other racial and ethnic groups were measured. Davis (1993) claimed that the media legitimized a racist domination of sport by placing European Americans in the ideal or normative position. If African Americans did not receive the number of feature articles proportionate to their participation levels in the three team sports that are the focus of *Sports Illustrated*, would this provide evidence of discriminatory treatment?

Ashe (1988), Edwards (1969), Harrison (2001), Lapchick (1984), and others have described the discriminatory treatment suffered by African Americans in sport as oppressive, humiliating, and persistent. Levy and Bryant (1993) reported that African Americans were treated in stereotypical ways in copy and advertising photographs in *Sports Illustrated*. Kinkema and Harris (1998) concluded that racist ideologies have persisted in the print and electronic media. Sabo and Jansen (1994) suggested that racial stereotyping of African Americans in sports by the media has been covert and systemic. Stereotypical comments and treatment, according to Rainville and McCormick (1977), have become more subtle, elusive, and abstract, such as when European-Americans receive more praise and less criticism than do African-Americans.

As one illustration of the use of power, prestige, or the normative position, the electronic and print media has persistently proclaimed that European Americans' sporting achievements were under their control through hard work, while discounting those of African Americans by attributing their accomplishments to natural ability (Davis, 1990; Rainville & McCormick, 1977; Sabo & Jensen, 1994). Murrell and Curtis (1994) reported that the print media most often

credited the performances by African American quarterbacks to uncontrollable factors such as natural ability; the performances of European American quarterbacks were attributed to controllable factors such as hard work. Johnson, Hallinan, and Westerfield (1999) found that many people stated that the success of African American male intercollegiate basketball players was based on their innate athletic abilities, such as natural quickness and speed, natural jumping ability, longer limbs, and extra muscle tissue. No empirical evidence exists to substantiate these perceptions.

Simons (2003) reported that African American football and basketball players were more likely to exhibit verbal and non-verbal behaviors, such as trash talking, taunting, and dancing. It could be argued, however, that such actions were reflective of their cultural experiences, even though these actions may conflict with the norms of many European Americans. Penalties and sanctions imposed by mostly European American sport officials and reporters, coaches, and fans' critical comments could have occurred, he suggested, because these behaviors were viewed as threatening and representative of a different cultural identity.

African Americans continue to be marginalized in many facets of society from incidents of profiling by public safety officers to the educational achievement gap among school students. Powerful implications socially and politically remain when African Americans are positioned as the "other," because "whiteness" remains the standard. Given that ethnicity is an important social construct in society, it might be assumed that the increased presence of African Americans in sport would be reflected in more proportionate coverage provided in *Sports Illustrated*. But, since European Americans control the world of sports, enjoy the highest prestige, and remain the standard against which those of other ethnicities are judged, a second-class status for African Americans in sport has persisted. The research question that this study sought to answer was,

"how were African Americans covered in *Sports Illustrated* during the 1990s relative to their participation levels based on the number of feature articles, article length in column inches, and number of pictures in these articles?"

Methods

The author independently read and analyzed every ($n = 1625$) feature article in *Sports Illustrated* between January 1990 and December 1999. There was little room for bias, even with only one reviewer, since the interpretive decision was simply to identify feature articles. The operational definition of a feature article was one that presented information about the accomplishments of an athlete, coach, owner, and other person associated with sport. Articles that reported on the results of a sporting event or competition did not meet these criteria. In the feature articles about teams, which may have included persons of more than one ethnicity, multiple individuals and their ethnicities were counted.

The author compiled and analyzed descriptive statistics about the ethnicity of the person in the feature article, this person's sport, role of the individual featured, length in column inches of each feature article, number of pictures of the person featured, and number of pictures of others in each feature article. The author measured each article in column in inches, even though a page may have been laid out as one or two or three columns or varied in type face or font. This was consistent with the method used by Lumpkin and Williams (1991). Since the intent was to analyze the coverage given to European Americans versus African Americans and not how the individual was pictured, such as in action shot versus a posed photograph, the number of pictures was counted and reported.

Relative to ethnicity, pictures and specific statements in the feature articles were used to identify individuals from the United States as European Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native

Americans, and mixed races (defined in this way when the parental heritage as stated in the article indicated two or more races). For example, Tiger Woods was classified of mixed races because his heritage includes Caucasian, African American, Indian, and Asian. In the few articles that did not provide sufficient information about ethnicity to make a classification, pictures were used to identify race as a proxy for ethnicity. All individuals from outside the United States and its territories (such as Puerto Rico) were classified as internationals.

In reading each article, the author identified words or phrases that could be classified as racist. Racist language was operationally defined as words about African Americans that emphasized their physical traits, deemphasized their intellectual abilities, attributed their athletic prowess to racial advantages rather than to training and hard work, or trivialized their achievements in sports. Also identified were descriptions about European Americans that reinforced them as the norm, such as being physically attractive to females.

Results

The number of feature articles for European Americans and African Americans is the initial descriptive data reported. This section will be followed by the sport of the individual featured, role of the individual featured, article length in column inches, and number of pictures in each feature article. Lastly will be the qualitative information about possible racist language.

Number of Feature Articles

European Americans were the focus of 49.4% of the feature articles; African Americans were featured in 32.9% of the articles (see Table 2). Individuals associated with the three popular team sports (football—411 or 25.3%; baseball—301 or 18.5%; and basketball—301 or 18.5%) accounted for nearly two-thirds of the feature articles.

In 8 of the 10 years in the 1990s (see Table 3), European Americans were more likely to be the subjects of feature articles, with the most dramatic difference occurring in 1993 when there were twice (136 to 68) as many articles about European Americans as African Americans. In 1991 and 1999, feature articles of African Americans exceeded (by one and nine respectively) the number of those for European Americans.

Sport of the Featured Individual

Football players or other persons involved with that sport were featured most for European Americans (205) with 195 African Americans featured. African Americans in basketball were featured nearly twice as frequently as European Americans (178 to 99). The other sports in which African Americans were more likely than European Americans to be the subject of feature articles were boxing and track and field (see Table 2).

European Americans in other sports dominated in the number of feature articles. For example, 38.6% (310 out of 803) of the articles about European Americans were about individuals in sports other than baseball, basketball, and football. The equivalent number for African Americans was 15.9% (85 out of 534). Of these 85 feature articles, 69.4% were about African Americans in boxing and track and field. European Americans were featured in over 50 sports, while African Americans were featured in 16.

Role of the Featured Individual

For European Americans, feature articles were divided among athletes (630 or 78.5%), coaches (107 or 6.6%), owners (16 or 1%), and others (3.1%), such as individuals in sport management, officials, and media personnel. In the feature articles about non-athletes, European Americans (83.6%) dominated; most (93.3%) of the feature articles about African Americans were about athletes (see Table 4).

Table 2

Sport and Ethnicity of the Person Featured

Sport	European Americans Percent (Frequency) of total feature articles	African Americans Percent (Frequency) of total feature articles	Internationals Percent (Frequency) of total feature articles	Other Ethnic Minorities Percent (Frequency) of total feature articles
Auto racing	1.2% (20)	.06% (1)	0.4% (6)	.06% (1)
Baseball	11.6% (189)	4.7% (76)	1.2% (20)	1.0% (16)
Basketball	6.1% (99)	11.0% (178)	1.0% (17)	0.4% (7)
Boxing	0.5% (8)	2.5% (41)	0.5% (8)	0.4% (6)
Football	12.6% (205)	12.0% (195)	0.3% (5)	0.4% (6)
Golf	2.6% (42)	.06% (1)	0.9% (14)	0.7% (12)
Ice hockey	2.3% (37)	0.1% (2)	4.3% (70)	0.1% (2)
Soccer	1.0% (17)	.06% (1)	0.6% (9)	0% (0)
Swimming	0.6% (10)	.06% (1)	0.2% (3)	0% (0)
Tennis	1.6% (26)	0.4% (7)	1.4% (22)	.06% (1)
Track and field	0.6% (9)	1.1% (18)	1.0% (17)	0.1% (2)
Wrestling	1.2% (10)	0.6% (1)	0.6% (1)	.06% (1)
All other sports	8.1% (131)	0.7% (12)	2.3% (37)	0.4% (6)
Total	49.4% (803)	32.9% (534)	14.1% (229)	3.6% (59)

Table 3

Analysis by Year for Ethnicity in the Number of Feature Articles

Year	European American	African American	Hispanic American	Asian American	Native American	Mixed races	International
1990	78	46	2	0	0	0	18
1991	56	57	4	0	0	1	17
1992	64	41	4	0	0	0	18
1993	136	68	5	1	1	2	32
1994	141	85	8	1	1	1	39
1995	89	52	0	2	0	2	25
1996	74	41	6	1	0	3	18
1997	62	47	1	0	1	2	20
1998	54	39	0	2	0	2	26
1999	49	58	4	0	0	2	16
Total	803	534	34	7	3	15	229

Table 4
Role of the Person Featured by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Athlete Percent (Frequency)	Coach Percent (Frequency)	Owner Percent (Frequency)	Other Percent (Frequency)
European American	38.8% (630)	6.6% (107)	1.0% (16)	3.1% (50)
African American	30.6% (498)	1.5% (25)	0% (0)	0.7% (11)
Hispanic American	2.1% (34)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Asian American	0.4% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Native American	0.2% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Mixed races	0.9% (15)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
International	13.4% (218)	0.4% (7)	0% (0)	0.2% (4)
Total	86.5% (1405)	8.6% (139)	1.0% (16)	4.0% (65)

Length of the Feature Articles

The mean length for all feature articles was 49.29 column inches. European American boxer Rocky Marciano was featured in the longest article (200 column inches), while the second longest (196 column inches) described a male golfer of mixed races, Tiger Woods. Articles about African Americans were slightly longer on average (49.65 column inches) than those for European Americans (49.34 column inches) (see Table 5).

Table 5

Column Inches of the Feature Articles by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Frequency	Mean
European American	803	49.34
African American	534	49.65
Hispanic American	34	42.24
Asian American	7	29.43
Native American	3	51.67
Mixed races	7	70.60
International	229	48.48
Total	1625	49.29

Pictures in the Feature Articles

The average number of total pictures for the feature articles was 4.33. Articles about European Americans included an average of 4.47 pictures per article and an average of 3.77 pictures of the person featured. African Americans had slightly fewer pictures per article (an average of 4.21) with 3.68 pictures of the featured person. The means of the total pictures per article for each ethnic group as well as the average number of pictures of the individual featured are provided in Table 6. A European American football coach, Don Shula, was pictured the most—33 pictures of him and 6 of others in the feature article about him. Actor/boxer Sylvester Stallone was pictured the second most often (18 pictures of him out of a total of 20). Of the top 10 sports in the number of feature articles, individuals in boxing (5.65) and tennis (4.64) were pictured most frequently.

Possible Use of Racist Language

In addition to providing descriptive statistics about the extent of coverage by ethnicity in sport, this study also examined each feature article to identify if the language used to describe European Americans and African Americans was similar or different. For example, feature articles about African

Americans Evander Holyfield and Dominique Wilkins praised their physical attributes and those about Magic Johnson and Allen Iverson credited them with superb athleticism. This was in direct contrast with emphasizing the blond hair and blue eyes of Hobey Baker and Troy Aikman and the sensual attraction of European Americans such as Joe Namath and Christian Laettner. Table 7 lists a few examples of possibly stereotypical, but not racist, language used to describe the featured individual.

In professional and NCAA Division I basketball and football where African Americans dominate as athletes, they were featured much less frequently than participation numbers would suggest they might be. Excluding these two sports plus boxing and track and field, African Americans are featured in only 26 articles in all other sports, a number unrepresentative of national demographics. This low number also reflects the dearth of articles about African Americans coaches, owners, and others in sport. The differences in the length of the features articles favoring African Americans and in the number of pictures per article favoring European Americans were slight. Descriptions of African Americans were not classified as racist, even though there were some differences in the types of words used to describe the featured individuals.

Discussion

African Americans in the 1990s were less likely to be featured in articles in *Sports Illustrated* than were European Americans. It would appear this amount of coverage relative to their levels of participation perpetuated a higher status for European Americans. That is, they remained the standard with African Americans classified as the "other." Editors of *Sports Illustrated* may have chosen to feature mostly African American superstars or only the very best African Americans in the three top team sports, and thus more European Americans, to appeal to its readership. Other possibilities to explain why African Americans were not featured in articles

proportionate to their participation levels in the most popular team sports could be that there was an intentional or inadvertent perpetuation of societal perceptions of the hegemonic domination of European Americans in sports.

This study affirmed that more African Americans had feature articles written about them in the stereotypical "Black sports" of basketball, boxing, and track and field (and almost as many articles in football). As more African Americans chose these five sports because of the dream of lucrative professional contracts, they have come to dominate numerically in all of these, with the electronic and print media reporting on their achievements accordingly. These findings could indicate a move toward equity in the 1990s in the coverage in *Sports Illustrated* favoring African Americans since this differed from that reported by Levy and Bryant (1993) and Lumpkin and Williams (1991).

A much larger number of feature articles were written about European Americans in sports such as cycling, golf, swimming, and tennis that have been labeled as "White sports." *Sports Illustrated* provided extensive coverage in feature articles about European Americans in these and a wide range of other sports from auto racing to wrestling. One reason could be that European Americans, whether due to economic factors, cultural expectations, opportunities, or choices, have a long history of competing in many more sports than do African Americans, and hence there were champions or success stories in more sports from which to select the individuals for feature articles. Additionally almost all of the owners, coaches, sport management personnel, officials, or individuals working in the media were European Americans, thus providing a broader array of individuals that the editors of *Sports Illustrated* judged worthy of featuring.

Feature articles about African Americans in the 1990s were less than a third of an inch longer than those for European Americans. This differed from the finding of Lumpkin and Williams (1991) that the feature articles of European Americans were

Table 6

Means per Article of the Total Pictures and Pictures of the Featured Person by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Frequency	All pictures	Pictures of the featured person
European American	803	4.47	3.77
African American	534	4.21	3.68
Hispanic American	34	4.32	3.38
Asian American	7	2.00	2.00
Native American	3	4.00	2.33
Mixed races	15	5.40	4.40
International	229	4.16	3.65
Total	1625	4.33	3.71

Table 7

Descriptive Language Used to Describe European Americans, African Americans, and Mixed Races

Year	Sport	Athlete	Quoted words from feature articles
1990	Ice skating	Chris Bowman (European American)	"In some respects Bowman resembles a masculine version of Katarina Witt: flirtatious, sensual..." ¹
1991	Football	Joe Namath (European American)	"...striking good looks that made him the symbol of youth and rebellion." ²
1991	Basketball	Clarence Witherspoon (African American)	"...commanding confluence of thick legs, broad shoulders, and long rock-solid arms..." ³
1991	Football & ice hockey	Hobey Baker (European American)	"...so flawlessly proportioned..."; "...with blond hair and soft blue-grey eyes, he was among the handsomest of men, so disarming in appearance that his contemporaries at Princeton were not embarrassed to call him beautiful." ⁴
1991	Boxing	Evander Holyfield (African American)	"...handsome visage and his comic-book superhero's physique..." ⁵
1992	Golf	Fred Couples (European American)	"...jewel thief's grace, a barracuda player's looks, and a royal gait...who wears clothes so wonderfully well." ⁷
1992	Basketball	Dominique Wilkins (African American)	"Wilkins's game, after all, was based on his athleticism—explosive quickness and uncanny midair adjustment—and thus was more susceptible to the ravages of injury." ⁸
1992	Basketball	Magic Johnson (African American)	"Magic became the embodiment of Showtime with his behind-the-back wizardry, his look-away passes and his million-dollar smile." ⁹
1994	Basketball	Christian Laettner (European American)	"...handsome, innocent look of a matinee idol."; "...as good looking as Robert Redford..."; "...with those killer blue eyes..." ¹⁰

1996	Football	Troy Aikman (European American)	“...tall, blond, and blue-eyed...”; “...the game’s latest, greatest heartthrob...” ¹¹
1997	Football	Mike Alstott (European American)	“With a stylish goatee covering his milk and cookies face and man-of-steel physique, Alstott doesn’t want for potential partners.” ¹²
1998	Basketball	Allen Iverson (African American)	“You’re good looking, you’re loaded with personality and charisma, you’ve got this incredible athletic ability, marvelous artistic ability, you love people...” ¹³
1998	Football	Tim Brown (African American)	“...to be bright and funny and possessed of a face and body that would not be out of place in a Calvin Klein underwear ad.” ¹⁴
1999	Baseball	Derek Jeter (mixed races)	“...chick magnet.” ¹⁵
1999	Baseball	Chipper Jones (European American)	“He was a made-for-Dixie hero with a lopsided aw-shucks grin that made girls swoon...” ¹⁶

¹Swift, E. M. (1990). Hans Brinker from hell. *Sports Illustrated*, 72(6), 80.

²Zimmerman, P. (1991). Guaranteed cool. *Sports Illustrated*, 74(3), 75.

³Hersch, H. (1991). Spoon dishes it out. *Sports Illustrated*, 74(5), 44.

⁴Fimrite, R. (1991). A flame that burned too brightly. *Sports Illustrated*, 74(10), 79.

⁵O’Brien, R. (1991). A quest for respect. *Sports Illustrated*, 74(13), 60.

⁶Kirkpatrick, C. (1992). LaBomba. *Sports Illustrated*, 76(4), 54; 57.

⁷Reilly, R. (1992). King of swing. *Sports Illustrated*, 76(10), 51.

⁸McCallum, J. (1992). The newlywed game. *Sports Illustrated*, 77(24), 48.

⁹Ryan, R. (1992). The two and only. *Sports Illustrated*, 77(25), 49.

¹⁰Angeli, M. (1994). The lone wolf. *Sports Illustrated*, 80(11), 87; 91.

¹¹Bradley, J.E. (1996). Troy Aikman. *Sports Illustrated*, 84(2), 82; 83.

¹²Silver, M. (1997). Big stuff. *Sports Illustrated*, 87(21), 42.

¹³Reilly, R. (1998). Counterpoint. *Sports Illustrated*, 88(10), 95.

¹⁴Murphy, A. (1998). Sweet moves. *Sports Illustrated*, 89(1), 54.

¹⁵Silver, M. (1999). (1999). Prince of the city. *Sports Illustrated*, 90(25), 106.

¹⁶Verducci, T. (1999). Switched on. *Sports Illustrated*, 91(3), 46.

an average of 5.4 column inches longer than those of African Americans. This change could support the premise that more African American superstars were featured in longer articles, while more, but shorter, articles were written about European Americans in a wider variety of sports. It seemed to affirm the popularity of basketball and football and the increasing number of outstanding African Americans in these two sports worthy of being featured. This near equity in the length of feature articles in *Sports Illustrated* seemed to support the finding of Sabo, Jansen, Tate, Duncan, and Leggett (1996) that the electronic and print media is becoming more sensitive to the coverage provided to individuals of various ethnicities than in the past.

The feature articles in *Sports Illustrated* in the 1990s did not contain demeaning words or characterizations of African Americans that would be considered condescending or negative on the basis of heritage. The dearth of racist language in comparison to that reported by Lumpkin and Williams (1991) indicated greater sensitivity to and an affirmation of valuing diversity in sport in the 1990s than existed previously. However, to a limited extent, there was a perpetuation in the favored status of European Americans based on references to their good looks and appeal to women. By way of contrast, the African Americans in the feature articles cited were more likely to be praised for their athleticism or physical talents than for good looks or appeal to women.

Conclusion

Sports magazines, through what they have portrayed, have influenced what was valued in society relative to sport. As the number of African Americans increased in their athletic achievements at the highest levels, *Sports Illustrated* increasingly wrote about them in feature articles. Society's greater acceptance and celebration of the athletic achievements of African Americans, especially in basketball and football, was affirmed by the greater coverage provided them in this magazine than in previous times.

Yet, if the inclusion of feature articles in *Sports Illustrated* is representative of the relative status

of various sports, European Americans have maintained their dominant position in the majority of sports in this country. This occurs even though *Sports Illustrated* reports most often about football, basketball, and baseball, with the first two dominated by African Americans. A combination of role models, opportunities, economic factors, and choices has perpetuated *de facto* segregation in sport by ethnicity.

Sports Illustrated did not marginalize African Americans relative to the coverage it provided them based on the length of or the number of pictures in feature articles. However, the coverage in *Sports Illustrated* of African Americans in basketball and football was much less than representative of their participation levels. This disparity, along with the much larger number of feature articles written about European Americans in a wide variety of sports, provided evidence that European Americans remain the standard and are viewed as more deserving (i.e., holding higher prestige) of being the subject of feature articles published in *Sports Illustrated* than are African Americans.

Suggestions for Future Research

Since the findings of this study confirm changes in the coverage of African Americans in one popular sports magazine between its early years and the 1990s, continued studies are needed to analyze if this trend is continuing in the twenty-first century. Examining the coverage of African Americans and European Americans in other magazines, newspapers, televised sports competitions, and sporting news broadcasts could answer this query. Researchers need to investigate the editorial policies of the electronic and print media to determine if the frequency, length, language, and other characteristics of coverage are marketed specifically to those readers and viewers who will increase their revenue (i.e., sell advertising or copies). Or, are editorial choices reflective of a perpetuation of the hegemonic domination of European Americans in sports? An intriguing possibility would be to examine through interviews

the perceptions of the individuals who are the subject of feature articles in *Sports Illustrated* or other sports magazines. This could shed important light on how these sports personalities perceive their treatment relative to others of comparable status or achievements. In each of these suggested studies, it is important for researchers to explore whether sport reflects or helps share societal attitudes.

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