Colorblind or Blinded by Color? An Analysis of Race and Gender Stereotyping Among
College Basketball Broadcasters

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Abstract

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College basketball broadcasters have been shown to apply stereotypes when evaluating players of different races. That is, they tend to praise black athletes for their physical attributes and abilities, while commending white athletes for their hustle, hard work, and basketball intelligence. Conversely, commentators often criticize black players for making poor basketball decisions, while condemning white players for their physical limitations. This study analyzed games from the men’s and women’s 2008 NCAA tournaments to determine the extent of these biases in light of the racial demographics of players within the sample. Overall, this study found that commentators remained likely to confine their praise and criticism to certain traits when assessing black and white basketball players of both sexes. Thus, this study provided further evidence for racial stereotyping among college basketball broadcasters.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Joseph P. Bernt

Professor of Journalism
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Race and Sport in Society

It is often said that sports reflect society, for:

The first principle of sport sociology is that sport inevitably recapitulates the character, structure, and dynamics of human and institutional relationships within and between societies and the ideological values and sentiments that rationalize and justify those relationships... It was simply inevitable, given sport’s status as an integrated institutional component of society, that laws, regulatory edicts, and executive orders, which so profoundly affect American life... would have no less profound impact within sport. And nowhere has this impact been more evident than in the sphere of interracial relations.¹

The truth is that sports have traditionally been ahead of society, especially in terms of race. Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in modern-day baseball in 1947, seven years before Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas and 17 years before the Civil Rights Act. Over the next several decades, color barriers in sport – and society – eroded. Still, allowing African Americans to participate in sports does not mean that racism is no longer prevalent in sports – and ending racism in sports, of course, does not end racism in society.

Political, cultural, and economic factors in the United States have entangled blacks in a web of disease, devastation, and violence that have diminished the potential and stability of African American civil society.² In 2002, for example, blacks reported 47 percent of new HIV/AIDS cases – now the leading cause of death among African American males and females between the ages of 25 and 44 – despite comprising just 12

²Ibid., 122.
percent of the U.S. population.\(^3\) African Americans also represent a disproportionate number of homicide victims – the leading cause of death for African American males between the ages of 15 and 44 – and both the victim and the perpetrator are black in 94 percent of these cases.\(^4\) In addition, while the overall homicide rate in the United States registers around 8.4 deaths per 100,000, the firearm homicide rate for African American males is 103.4 deaths per 100,000.\(^5\) Blacks also account for two-thirds of all arrests for robbery, and more than 26.5 percent of African Americans are living in poverty compared to 7.5 percent of whites.\(^6\)

These statistics comprise a small sample of the sizeable data that exist pertaining to the status of African Americans. Because an alarmingly high percentage of blacks are indigent, diseased, murdered, or murdering, African Americans often struggle to see the light at the end of a long, bleak tunnel. Many blacks have come to view sports and entertainment as the only possible avenues to success; if a black youth cannot rap, sing, dance, or act, he or she had better play a sport if he or she wishes to pursue a better life.\(^7\) This mindset stems largely from the media, which, through their glorification of athletes and rappers – the majority of whom tend to be young and black – have created within African American youth a one-dimensional pursuit of sports and entertainment as ways to beat the system.\(^8\) As limiting as this mindset is, however, the notion that black athletes – regardless of how talented they are – can achieve success through sports is a relatively recent phenomenon.

\(^3\) Ibid, 123.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid, 126.
\(^7\) Ibid, 129.
\(^8\) Ibid.
The image of the black athlete has a rather dubious history in U.S. society. The Jim Crow era, for example, was founded on the idea that African Americans were inhuman. This ideology was based in part on stereotypes regarding the physical attributes and abilities of blacks, such as strength, speed, stamina, and intellectual inferiority. Many felt that African Americans were not capable of competing with “sophisticated whites” in sports that had structured rules. The Harlem Globetrotters of the 1940s did little to challenge this notion. The Globetrotters were comedic and often interrupted the game to taunt opponents, referees, and even fans. This behavior led to the belief that African Americans were not serious athletes, which provided justification for their exclusion from organized sport. Thus, the success and failure of African American athletes were attributed to a constant battle between their physiology and psychology.9

Integration in College Basketball

As was the case with many sports at one time or another, African Americans were not permitted to play college basketball during the first part of the twentieth century. Integration in college basketball – at least, in the men’s game – occurred at a slow pace, as black players appeared sparingly in the 1950s. Some of these players, such as Bill Russell, who led San Francisco to back-to-back national championships in 1955 and 1956, were integral to their team’s success. Coaches realized that if they wanted to build the best possible team, then they would need the best possible players; in order to have the best possible players, they would need to recruit both blacks and whites. As a result,

black players appeared more frequently in college basketball during the 1960s. The 1966 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Championship Game, in which Texas Western’s all-black starting lineup defeated Kentucky’s all-white squad, forever changed the racial landscape of men’s college basketball. This victory gave black players respect and legitimacy; by 1970, 246 teams in all of college basketball were integrated, and two-thirds of the starting players on those teams were African American.\footnote{Jeremy M. Deason, “Racial Integration and the Modernization of Men’s College Basketball,” Master’s Thesis, Springfield College, 2004, 8.} Over the next three decades, the racial divide became even less apparent, as blacks came to comprise a majority of men’s college basketball players.\footnote{James A. Rada and Tim K. Wulfemeyer, “Color Coded: Racial Descriptors in Television Coverage of Intercollegiate Sports,” \textit{Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media} 49, no. 1, [March 2005], 71.}

Unlike men’s college basketball – which originally limited play to whites – women’s college basketball originally limited play to blacks.\footnote{Rita Liberti, “Fostering Community Consciousness: The Role of Women’s Basketball at Black Colleges and Universities, 1900-1950,” in \textit{Race and Sport: The Struggle for Equality on and off the Field}, ed. Charles K. Ross (Jackson, Miss: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 41.} At most white colleges, the idea of women playing basketball clashed with the traditional visions of propriety and gentility that they wanted their students to embody, and as a result, competition was restricted to intramurals.\footnote{Ibid.} Many black colleges, however, did not share this mindset. For example, Bennett College, a single-sex all-black school located in North Carolina, featured one of the premier women’s basketball programs in the country in the 1930s. For athletes like Lucille Townsend, who starred at Bennett, basketball was a means to develop leadership, discipline, perseverance, and self-confidence, for:

Parents and educational facilities worked toward developing young women of sound character who embodied the qualities of tenacity and self-control that would help them engage the inevitable obstacles placed in their paths by racism and sexism. The
basketball court served as one of many laboratories on college campuses where African American women worked to sharpen decision-making and leadership skills amid conflict and tension. Such practical experience strengthened the likelihood that young women would handle similar situations beyond the basketball arena with equanimity.\(^{14}\)

Thus, schools did not want to shield women from racist and sexist policies; rather, they wanted to enable players to confront and conquer racism and sexism by instilling a sense of empowerment, as opposed to a sense of victimization.\(^{15}\) Several other schools implemented similar practices, including Livingstone College and Tuskegee Institute.\(^{16}\)

**Equality of the Female Athlete**

While black male basketball players were limited by race, black female basketball players were limited by race and gender. As stated previously, many white colleges in the early twentieth century did not feel it was appropriate for women to play basketball. In addition to compromising the traditional ideals of true womanhood (such as purity, domesticity, and submissiveness), many schools feared that playing basketball would make women – both white and black – more masculine.\(^{17}\) They also worried that playing too aggressively would affect a woman’s ability to reproduce and negatively influence the menstrual cycle.\(^{18}\) In an attempt to prevent girls from becoming overactive, new rules were instituted for women; they were not allowed to dribble or guard each other, they

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\(^{14}\) Ibid, 43-44.

\(^{15}\) Ibid, 42.


could have as many as ten players on one team on the court, and the largest playing area was 23 feet by 25 feet at most and as small as 8 feet by 12 feet (compared to 94 feet by 50 feet today). Women were also not allowed to play in front of men because schools feared that it would “lower a certain standard of womanhood” and serve “decidedly against the reputation of [universities].” Thus, the women’s game evolved slowly but surely. For example, the 30-second shot clock was introduced in 1964; women were eventually allowed to take three dribbles, but the continuous dribble became a staple of the women’s game by 1966; and, like the men, women were allowed to play a full-court game of five-on-five in 1971 – 80 years after the game’s inception in 1891.

Simply because men and women played by the same rules, however, did not mean that women were considered as equals to the men. Title IX helped to level the playing field. Passed as part of the Education Amendments in 1972, Title IX read, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” Although it made no reference to athletics, Title IX significantly affected the growth and expansion of women’s sports. For example, the number of females participating in high school or collegiate athletics was 294,000 in

1971; by 1981, that number jumped to 1.8 million. During that same period, the number of varsity sports offered to females increased from 14 to more than 30, and 35 percent of participants on varsity teams were female.

One of the most influential events in women’s sports occurred in 1973. In the infamous “Battle of the Sexes,” Billy Jean King, a female tennis player, defeated Bobby Riggs, a male tennis player. Granted, Riggs was 55 years old and King was in her prime, but this match did for women what the game between Texas Western and Kentucky did for African Americans; it gave legitimacy to female athletes and to the world of women’s sports. In 1978, a 16-team women’s basketball tournament appeared on television, marking the first time that women’s basketball received national coverage from NBC.

The first official women’s NCAA tournament took place in 1982, with CBS airing the 32-team playoff. The championship game, in which Louisiana Tech defeated Cheyney State 76-62, earned the top television rating of 7.3. CBS has aired every women’s championship game since. In 1983, the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) televised non-championship women’s basketball games for the first time. The following year, Pat Summit, who has more wins than any other coach – men’s or women’s – in college basketball history, guided the United States to a gold medal at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

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24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Hult, “Introduction to Part II,” 218.
28 Ibid, 327.
29 Ibid.
31 Ibid, 328.
in 1988, defeating Yugoslavia in the championship game in Seoul.\textsuperscript{32} Both squads were comprised of college players, which increased the popularity of the women’s college game; in 1989, the NCAA tournament expanded to 48 teams.\textsuperscript{33} In addition, professional basketball eventually became an option for females with the inception of the Women’s Basketball League (WBL) in 1978. The WBL folded three years later due to lack of funding, but the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) emerged in 1996 and has remained a strong and stable organization.\textsuperscript{34}

As women gained more acceptance on the court, so too, did African American females. While white players (such as Nancy Lieberman, Rebecca Lobo, and Sue Bird) and coaches (such as the aforementioned Summit) have undoubtedly had a profound influence on the growth of women’s basketball, African Americans have also made strides for the game. The first great black female player to receive national acclaim was Cheryl Miller, who was the National High School Player of the Year in 1981 and 1982, a four-time All-American at the University of Southern California, and a three-time Naismith Player of the Year winner; she also led the Trojans to two national championships in 1983 and 1984 and starred on the gold-medal team in 1984. In fact, \textit{Sports Illustrated} named Miller the best basketball player in the nation – male or female – in 1986. Miller was a pioneer for women’s basketball and laid the foundation for future African American stars, including Lisa Leslie and Sheryl Swoopes. In addition, C.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 330.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 331.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 320.
Vivian Stringer, an African American head coach at Rutgers University, is one of the premier head coaches in women’s basketball.35

The Student-Athlete in the Classroom

Through the years, basketball has afforded many African Americans – both male and female – a college education.36 One would assume, then, that a college degree would ensure the success of African American student-athletes even if they are unable to become professional athletes. The graduation rates of African Americans, however, suggest otherwise. Only 40 percent of black student-athletes graduate – by far the lowest graduation rate of all race and gender classifications of student-athletes attending NCAA Division I schools.37 For example, in the 2001 men’s NCAA tournament, 26 of the 64 teams graduated fewer than 35 percent of their African American players, and seven teams had African American graduation rates of zero.38 In addition, Nolan Richardson, an African American head coach, failed to graduate a single black player during his 17-year tenure at Arkansas. For many blacks, college is not a stepping stone to a degree and a better life; rather, it is a stepping stone to playing professional basketball. Despite the overwhelming odds of actualizing that goal, blacks tend to dedicate their primary focus to that endeavor.39

Like men, women can now make a living playing professional basketball. Like men, however, the odds of doing so are miniscule. There are only 14 teams in the

36 Harrison and Valdez, “The Uneven View of African American Ballers,” 188.
39 Ibid, 194.
WNBA – compared to 30 teams in the National Basketball Association (NBA) – and, even if a woman does become a professional basketball player, she will make substantially less money than any NBA player. For example, the maximum salary for a WNBA player in 2007 was $100,000, while the minimum salary for an NBA rookie was more than $385,000. As a result, many women play in Europe and Australia during the WNBA off-season.

Receiving a good education, then, is even more crucial for female basketball players, whose earning potential and odds of playing professionally are far lower than those of male basketball players. Unfortunately, female student-athletes are graduating at a rate lower than their non-sport female counterparts.40 One study found that female basketball players scored 177 points lower on their Scholastic Achievement Tests (SATs) than other students at public institutions and 240 points lower at private institutions.41 Thus, poor performance in the classroom is not just an African American male student-athlete phenomenon.42

Low graduation rates, which are due in part to the fact that black student-athletes are held to a lower standard in the classroom, have led to the term “scholar-baller.”43 Blacks are taught from a young age that they must hone their athletic skills through long sessions of practice.44 Popular sports commercials frequently show an African American shooting baskets well into the night, implying that practice not only takes up large

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40 Smith, “The African American Student Athlete,” 130.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid, 131.
44 Smith, “The African American Student Athlete,” 141.
amounts of time, but also that it is important – more important than, say, school work.\textsuperscript{45}

In general, African Americans are not asserting themselves as students. As a result:

The blind pursuit of attainment in sports is having a devastating effect on [African Americans]. Imbued with a belief that [the] principal avenue to fame and profit is through sports. . .far too many black kids treat basketball [courts] . . as. . .classrooms in an alternative school system. OK, I flunked English, a young athlete will say. But I got an A plus in slam dunking.\textsuperscript{46}

Because blacks have not seen the payoffs connected to education, they maintain the belief that playing sports is one of the feasible – and few – means for social mobility.\textsuperscript{47} Still, the fact remains that less than one percent of athletes playing Division I basketball ever sign a professional sports contract and more than 75 percent do not earn a diploma.\textsuperscript{48}

Where does that leave black basketball players who neither play professional sports nor graduate? Some African Americans, including sociologist and Professor Emeritus Harry Edwards at Berkeley, blame blacks for the plight not only of student-athletes, but also for the race in general, for:

The undeniable fact is that through its blind belief in sport as an extraordinary route to social and economic evaluation, black society has unwittingly become an accessory to, and a major perpetrator of, the rape, or less figuratively put, the disparate exploitation of black student athletes. We have in effect set up our own children for academic victimization and athletic exploitation by our encouragement of, if not insistence upon, the primacy of sports achievement over all else.\textsuperscript{49}

Thus, some African Americans feel in many ways responsible for the current condition of black society and believe that they have no one to blame but themselves. It is unlikely,\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 141-42.\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 142.\textsuperscript{47} Harrison and Valdez, “The Uneven View of African American Ballers,” 198.\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, 194.\textsuperscript{49} Smith, “The African American Student Athlete,” 139.
However, that responsibility lies entirely on either side; instead, both sides are culpable to some degree for the misuse of black student-athletes.

*The Student-Athlete on the Court*

That African Americans experience racism — and in some cases, sexism — in society is without question. Low expectations and poor graduation rates suggest that the academic aspect of the black student-athlete is also a victim of racism and sexism. But what about the athletic aspect? Is the hardwood the one place where black student-athletes remain untouched by racism? In a word, no. Granted, the number of African American athletes participating in professional and collegiate sports — including basketball — is more than proportional to their percentage in the U.S. population; in fact, sports are an arena of American culture in which blacks are now not only readily accepted, but also expected to appear. The problem, however, is the way in which black athletes are portrayed by the media, particularly in broadcast journalism.

Sports announcers tend to depict black athletes as naturally talented, while the accomplishments of white athletes are often attributed to intelligence and hard work. The notion that black athletes are physically superior to white athletes implies that they need neither intellectual prowess nor a strong work ethic to be successful; their skill comes naturally, and white athletes must outwork and out-think them just to compete. Even seemingly positive comments describing a black player as athletically gifted can be

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construed as a negative stereotype about “the lazy black athlete…who does not have to work hard to obtain athletic excellence.” The combination of predominantly white broadcasting crews and predominantly black athletes – along with the spontaneous, unscripted nature of television coverage – produce an environment prime for racial stereotyping. These representations span different sports at different levels, and college basketball is no exception.

“The Pictures in Our Heads”

Sports commentators – like all members of the media – have a responsibility to report objectively. They do not, however, always adhere to this fundamental principle of journalism. Walter Lippmann, who championed journalistic objectivity, believed that the media can instill a false sense of reality within society by creating differences between “the world outside” and “the pictures in our heads.” He suggested that journalism is much like a searchlight, one that moves throughout the night illuminating one small section of sky at a time, but one that never provides the public with an all-encompassing vision of society. Lippmann believed that the media cannot convey all of the necessary or important information to a passively receptive public; as a result, the media rely on

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oversimplified patterns of reporting that help people find meaning in the world.\textsuperscript{57} One such oversimplified pattern is the stereotype, which provides certainty and consistency to an otherwise chaotic and disorderly daily existence; in short, stereotypes narrow and limit experience in an emotionally satisfying way.\textsuperscript{58} Thus, Lippmann argued that people respond not to the actual environment in which they live, but to the pseudo-environment constructed by the media:\textsuperscript{59}

> The pictures inside the heads of...human beings...are their public opinions...This trickle of messages from the outside is affected by the stored up images, the preconceptions, and the prejudices which...powerfully direct...our attention and our vision [of the world]....The limited messages from the outside form into a pattern of stereotypes, which are identified with [people’s] own interests as [they] feel and conceive them.\textsuperscript{60}

It is not the responsibility of the media to make decisions for the public; rather, it is the responsibility of the media to provide people with the necessary tools to make decisions.\textsuperscript{61} Because the media report without a reliable picture of the world, they are prone to creating and reinforcing stereotypes among society.\textsuperscript{62}

Because the transmission of information through mass communication affects attitudes and behaviors, objective reporting – even in sports broadcasting – becomes that much more essential.\textsuperscript{63} As Gaye Tuchman observed, “Americans learn basic lessons

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Lippmann, “The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads,” 106-07.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Knowlton, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Lippmann, “The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads,” 111.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
about American life from the mass media.”\textsuperscript{64} She felt that news is the product of a social institution; that is, news is the product of reporters’ strategies for managing their work in a patterned way.\textsuperscript{65} In an attempt to analyze these patterns, Tuchman distinguished between knowledge and ideology.\textsuperscript{66} While knowledge is a means to know and provides a framework for constructing social reality, ideology is a means to not know and creates a framework which blocks people from understanding social reality.\textsuperscript{67} When sports broadcasters make stereotypical comments regarding athletes of particular races, they are not providing knowledge; they are preaching ideology, thereby providing listeners with a distorted portrayal of society. Thus, “news, as an ideology, disguises its own procedures for constructing reality by ‘substituting concepts for reality’ and by treating…as fact or assumption… [that which] should be explained.”\textsuperscript{68} As a result, news has the ability to inhibit an accurate understanding of contemporary life.\textsuperscript{69}

\textit{The Hutchins Commission}

The notion of journalistic responsibility was discussed in a 1947 report released by the Commission on Freedom of the Press. Also known as the Hutchins Commission (named for its chair, Robert M. Hutchins, then Chancellor of the University of Chicago), the committee was initiated and funded by \textit{Time} magazine publisher Henry Luce to study

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item David L. Eason, “Review Essay: News and the Construction of Society, \textit{Qualitative Sociology} 5, no. 3, [1982], 244.
  \item Ibid.
  \item Ibid, 244-45.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the state of the press in the United States.70 One of the main concerns of the group was that the press was moving away from the social responsibility of reporting the stories of extreme importance in a clear and accurate way and moving toward reporting only stories that were sensational, popular, and likely to attract readership.71 It was also concerned with the lack of local competition among newspapers and the subsequent growth of large newspaper chains. The commission felt that the press was sacrificing its public service duty in the interest of economic profit.72

The constitutional right of freedom of the press achieved a legal status because the “conscience of the citizen is the source of the continued vitality of the state” and “promotes the victory of truth over falsehood.”73 It was never expected that any one newspaper would represent all conflicting viewpoints regarding all public issues; taken as a whole, however, newspapers were expected to do just that.74 If they fail to do so, then the person whose opinions were not being represented could start his or her own publication.75 By developing its own conceptions of service and achievement, the press contributes to the maintenance and development of a free society.76 Quite simply, the Hutchins Commission found this contribution to be lacking:

Today our society needs, first, a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning; second, a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism; third, a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in society to one another; fourth, a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of the society; and, fifth, a way

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid, 213.
74 Ibid, 215.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid, 217.
of reaching every member of the society by the currents of information, thought, and feeling which the press supplies.\(^7\)

The Hutchins Commission laid out many reforms; for example, it established non-governmental press committees to monitor press performance and mediate disputes between the media and the public.\(^7\)

If the press were unable to regulate the appropriate reforms, however, the commission insinuated that the government would take the appropriate measures to assist in that effort.\(^7\)

The press responded to the Hutchins Commission with mixed feelings.\(^8\) Nevertheless, the report remains a historic statement of press rights and responsibilities.\(^9\)

By current standards, however, this report applies not only to the press, but also to media outlets such as broadcasting journalism and online journalism. All reporting at all levels on all issues – be it politics, economics, or sports – must promote truth rather than untruth if a democratic society is to thrive.

The Kerner Commission

Throughout the twentieth century, the press has not been the only segment of society in need of repair; problems stemming from race relations have long been an unfortunate fixture of American culture, and the 1960s were no exception. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (named the Kerner Commission for its chairperson, Otto Kerner, then governor of Illinois) was appointed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967 to investigate the causes of racial riots and disturbances that were

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\(^7\) Ibid, 218.
\(^8\) Ibid, 207.
\(^9\) Ibid, 207-08.
\(^8\) Ibid, 208.
\(^9\) Ibid.
occurring in many American cities at the time. In its report, issued one year later, the commission noted a city-suburb polarization that was rooted in racial and economic differences. 

In March of 1968, Governor Kerner wrote, “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal.” On the surface, this warning of a deepening racial division seemed only to point to a racial pattern “as old as American history.” Since colonial times, whites had insisted on and legally enforced the separate and unequal status of blacks. In 1944, Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal summarized the economic position of blacks, writing, “Except for a small minority enjoying upper or middle class status, the masses of American Negroes...are destitute. They own little property...their incomes are not only low but irregular. They thus live from day to day and have scant security for the future.” At that time, 87 percent of blacks were living below the poverty line (compared to 48 percent of whites) and per capita black incomes were 39 percent of white incomes. By 1964, 36 percent of black families and 9 percent of white families were living below the poverty line, and black income was about one-half that of white income. Despite this improvement, the Kerner Commission made it

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83 Ibid.
85 Ibid, 7.
86 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
clear that the discrimination and segregation taking place served to “threaten the future of
every American.”

In 1968, African Americans were still the recipients of racial discrimination. The
Kerner Commission reported that: “Negro workers are concentrated in the lowest-skilled
and lowest-paying occupations. These jobs often involve substandard wages, great
instability…extremely low status…little or no chance for meaningful advancement.”

Even if blacks achieved success, they could not enjoy the fruits of their labor:

Thousands of Negro families have attained incomes, living
standards and cultural levels matching or surpassing those of
whites who have ‘upgraded’ themselves from distinctly ethnic
neighborhoods. Yet most Negro families have remained within
predominantly Negro neighborhoods, primarily because they have
been effectively excluded from white residential areas . . . by
intimidation or violence . . . . Often, real estate agents simply
refuse to show homes to Negro buyers.

Thus, many black families remained in the ghetto because the “psychological
efforts and costs” of relocating were too high. As a result, the Kerner
Commission proposed strategies that emphasized not only ghetto enrichment, but
also racial integration.

During the 1960s and 1970s, national events were occurring that seemed
supportive of the Kerner Commission’s recommendation for racial integration. For
example, in 1964, the Civil Rights Act banned discrimination in all public institutions,
outlawed discrimination in employment of all types, and forbade discrimination in any

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92 Ibid, 21.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid, 19.
program involving the use of federal funds. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 attacked the disenfranchisement of African Americans and introduced countless new voters to the electoral process. In addition, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 barred discrimination in the rental or sale of housing. One by one, these laws destroyed the legal basis for racial segregation.

Yet, these programs alone were unable to heal America’s racial wounds. The riots were proof that antidiscrimination laws alone could never fully redress the residual wounds of segregation. Over the next eight years, the urban and poverty programs designed by President Johnson’s administration gradually lost executive and legislative steam. After Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964 (which Republican Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater voted against), Johnson began the medical and social programs of his Great Society program in an attempt to wage full combat in the War on Poverty. As a result, African Americans became Democratic voters en masse, as civil rights issues generated powerful black partisanship. When the Democrats lost control of the White House in 1968, however, African Americans lost the power to make their voices heard:

With the election of Nixon and Reagan…the country rejected the fundamental conclusions and recommendations of the Kerner Report. The issue of civil rights disappeared from national politics, and the idea that there was something fundamentally wrong with existing racial conditions, something that required

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96 Ibid, 20.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
strong governmental action, was rejected....Presidential politics polarized on racial grounds [as] four of the [next] five elections since the Kerner Report [were] won by the candidate who received virtually no black votes.\footnote{105}

Thus, African Americans have been confronted with much the same discrimination that they faced in 1968.

Unemployment, income and poverty gaps between blacks and whites were as wide in 1990 as they were in the mid-1960s.\footnote{106} In addition, blacks are still not free to live where they wish, regardless of their economic status; discrimination forces them into separate residential areas where a high percentage of economically poor and undereducated families live, and where educational and employment opportunities are greatly limited.\footnote{107} There is also polarization of black family incomes between the two-parent middle-class family and the female-headed lower-class family.\footnote{108} Not surprisingly, the growth in the number of female-headed households has meant that more black children have experienced the effects of poverty.\footnote{109} Rather than following the Kerner Commission’s unanimously recommended policy of racial integration and ghetto enrichment, America has tacitly adopted a policy calling for inactivity and recession.\footnote{110}

In short, U.S. national policy has accepted continued racial segregation, as well as high levels of poverty and poor education for African Americans.\footnote{111}

\footnote{107} Ibid.
\footnote{108} Ibid, 32.
\footnote{109} Ibid.
\footnote{110} Ibid, 20.
\footnote{111} Ibid.
Eliminating Stereotyping – Why Sports Broadcasting?

Stereotyping maintains its stranglehold on American culture, making the rooting out of stereotyping in any and all sectors of society – including sports broadcasting – a worthy endeavor. Because sports announcing occurs within a highly emotional context and its covert messages are continually repeated, hidden biases are likely to be stored in memories of audiences without attribution to a specific source.\(^{112}\) As a result, the conceptual frames adopted by announcers are easily transferred to fans and future sports announcers alike.\(^{113}\) This effect extends beyond athletics, for ways of thinking that are endemic in sports can frame unconscious thinking about racial groups in non-athletic situations.\(^{114}\) Thus, one generation unconsciously teaches prejudice to current and future generations through the culture of sport, and these prejudices leak into other areas of social life, thereby creating a discrepancy between “the world outside” and “the pictures in our heads.”\(^{115}\) This stereotyping represses the aspirations and achievements of all racial groups, making the exposure and elimination of stereotyping an endeavor of great social significance.\(^{116}\) The goal of this study was to assess racial stereotyping among college basketball broadcasters in men’s and women’s college basketball.


\(^{113}\) Ibid, 187.


\(^{115}\) Billings and Eastman, “Biased Voice of Sports: Racial and Gender Stereotyping in College Basketball Announcing,” 188.

\(^{116}\) Ibid.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Sport and Television

As African American participation in college basketball grew, so too did television coverage of college basketball. This relationship has proven to be mutually beneficial; networks have delivered sports coverage to large viewing audiences while increasing in both popularity and profit. National sports coverage became so popular that ESPN, a channel dedicated to broadcasting games and producing sports-related information, was introduced in 1979. Since then, several other channels have become part of the “ESPN Family of Networks,” including ESPN2.

The games broadcast on these – and other – networks provide a crucial source of potentially biased messages. In 1988, CBS sports announcer Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder attributed the success of black basketball players to selective and effective breeding by slave owners, saying, “Blacks are better athletes because they have been bred that way. Big black male slaves were mated with big black female slaves to produce a physically superior offspring to work in the fields. This created powerful legs, which gave blacks an advantage.” Snyder was fired by CBS for his remarks, but they reveal that game announcing and commentary provide a crucial source of biased messages. While overtly racist comments such as those made by Snyder are no longer commonplace in sports broadcasting, covertly racial messages remain prevalent. As events unfold on the court “at a machine-gun pace,” commentators must both inform and entertain without the

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2 Ibid.
opportunity to choose their words carefully, allowing subconscious beliefs and attitudes regarding race to surface.\textsuperscript{5}

\textit{The Biological Superiority of Blacks – Stereotype or Fact?}

Can these beliefs and attitudes, however, be considered racist? Are African Americans biologically superior to whites? After all, Snyder was not the first sports personality to attribute the success of black athletes to exceptional evolution. For example, in the 1930s, syndicated columnist Arthur Brisbane proposed his “missing link” theory to explain the triumphs of African Americans in the Olympics.\textsuperscript{6} Grantland Rice once called boxer Joe Louis a “Brown Cobra” because of his “blinding speed, the speed of the jungle, the instinctive speed of the wild.”\textsuperscript{7} Similarly, in 1941, Dean Cromwell wrote, “It was not long ago [that the black athlete’s] ability to sprint and jump was a life-and-death matter to him in the jungle. His muscles are pliable and his easy-going disposition is a valuable aid to the mental and physical relations that a runner and jumper must have.”\textsuperscript{8}

Numerous studies have been conducted pertaining to the supposed biological superiority of African Americans. It is widely accepted that there are no significant differences in height between blacks and whites, but African Americans tend to have proportionally longer limbs, shorter trunks and a narrower pelvic region.\textsuperscript{9} Blacks also

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid, 232.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, 171.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
have greater (by eight to 12 percent) bone density than whites, as well as faster nerve conduction velocities. When comparing race and physiology relative to athletic performance, however, there are no significant differences between blacks and whites:

Any physiological differences between racial groups must be of sufficient quantity and quality to affect performance. . . .Motor skill performances and physiological function are not one and the same. . . .and performance in activities such as running, jumping and throwing do not reflect physiological functions or predispositions independent of other factors, such as practice and habituation. . . .If African American superiority in a sport such as basketball is explainable by some physical advantage possessed by African Americans. . . .researchers would have to discover some physical variable, or more likely combination of variables, that are associated with basketball excellence for all performers, independent of racial background. That is, it will have to be more prevalent among African Americans than Caucasians. . . .To date, such variables have not been established. Thus, any performance is only partly impacted by physiology.11

In fact, researchers determined that if African American males possessed a performance trait making them naturally better than whites at basketball, a 27-fold advantage in that trait would be required to explain the resulting discrepancy regarding racial demographics within basketball compared to racial demographics within society (assuming that blacks comprise 12 percent of the population and 75 percent of a particular league).12 Despite evidence to the contrary, however, announcers remain more likely to confine their praise of black basketball players to statements regarding physical abilities and attributes.13

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
A Question of Style

If blacks are not physiologically superior to whites, perhaps stereotyping can be partially attributed to differing styles of play between the two races. As basketball legend Julius Erving observed, “Style counts in basketball to the black player. The ultimate play in basketball is when the artistic move is finished with a powerful move.” Black players, Erving implied, place primacy on plays that showcase their speed and strength.

One particular study suggested that black players and white players do, indeed, have different approaches to the game of basketball. Researchers studied pick-up games featuring black and white college-aged players and found that black players were more concerned about individual play and self-expression than their white counterparts. Black players felt the need to prove themselves by overcoming obstacles with finesse and body control; style was more important than proficiency or fundamental technique. For example, black players had lower shooting percentages than white players; took more forced shots (defender present) than white players; had fewer assists and fewer passes before each shot per game than white players; and initiated improvisational play (style play) almost twice as often as the white players, thereby leading to increased turnovers for black players.14 Perhaps stereotypes stem, in part, from the fact that black players tend to rely on agility, finesse, and body control more than do white players. Still, differing styles of play neither fully explain nor justify racial stereotypes among college basketball broadcasters.

Effects of Racial Stereotyping on Audiences

Research has suggested that racial stereotypes can influence the ways in which viewers and listeners perceive black and white basketball players. An experiment was conducted in which participants were asked to rate the attributes and performance of a basketball player after listening to a radio broadcast of a college basketball game. Before listening to the broadcast, each person was provided with a picture of the basketball player. Participants, however, were not all given the same picture; half of the people were given pictures of a white player, while the other half received pictures of a black player. In addition, half of the participants in each group were given a picture of a relatively unathletic player, and the other half was given a picture of a relatively athletic player. Participants were instructed to listen to the broadcast and assess the player’s athletic ability, individual performance and contribution to the team. The results indicated that participants relied on stereotypes of black and white athletes to guide their assessments. People who thought that the player was black rated him as having more physical ability than those who thought he was white. Black players were rated as contributing with their basketball skills, while white players were perceived as contributing through basketball intelligence and effort.\(^{15}\) Granted, half of the participants were given pictures of seemingly unathletic targets, players who would have to compensate for their lack of athleticism with intelligence or hustle – or both – to contribute to their teams. Unathletic black and white players, however, were rated

differently; the unathletic black player was rated as less intelligent and exerting less effort than the unathletic white player.\textsuperscript{16}

Researchers concluded that participants in this experiment likely learned these stereotypes from college basketball broadcasters. Rada and Wulfemeyer analyzed the language employed by sports commentators in their coverage of the 1998 NCAA football regular season and the 1999 men’s NCAA tournament and found evidence of a racial bias. The researchers selected televised coverage of collegiate football and basketball for four reasons. First, television coverage allowed for “live, unscripted, and unedited coverage – the environment in which stereotype priming has been shown to exist.”\textsuperscript{17} Second, their unit of analysis was available for more than six months annually, so they had a large sample from which to choose.\textsuperscript{18} Next, the demographics in college basketball were comparable; in the years that the studied games were played, African Americans comprised 46 percent of NCAA football players and 56 percent of NCAA basketball players.\textsuperscript{19} Finally, college athletes are also student-athletes, which provided an opportunity for broadcasters to comment on an individual player as both an athlete and a person.\textsuperscript{20} Rada and Wulfemeyer found that analysts tended to highlight the intellectual prowess, work ethic, and character of white players; but their comments regarding black players focused on negative stereotypes regarding on-court performance, on-court intellect and off-court behavior.\textsuperscript{21} For instance, black players received more positive comments pertaining to physical attributes (92 percent) and more negative comments

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 302.
\textsuperscript{17} Rada and Wulfemeyer, “Color Coded: Racial Descriptors in Television Coverage of Intercollegiate Sports,” 71.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 75-78.
pertaining to on-court intellect (96 percent) and off-court conduct (100 percent). While the results of this study strongly suggested a racial bias among commentators, Rada and Wulfemeyer did not account for the racial demographic within the games that they studied; that is, they assumed that because the percentages of blacks and whites were comparable for college football and basketball as a whole, then those percentages should apply to the individual games that they studied. This assumption could have skewed their results not in terms of the type of comments that broadcasters tended to associate with white players and black players, but with the proportion of those comments.

While the vast majority of research in this area of study has focused on men’s sports, similar research has been conducted for women’s college basketball. In their study of racial stereotyping in men’s and women’s college basketball, Billings and Eastman found that white females received a greater proportion of comments than did black females.\textsuperscript{23} No evidence of a gender bias was found.\textsuperscript{24} These findings alone, however, do not mean that racism and sexism are no longer prevalent in the sport, as evidenced by CBS radio personality Don Imus. In April of 2007, Imus referred to – on air – members of the predominantly black Rutgers women’s basketball team as “nappy-headed ho’s.”\textsuperscript{25} Imus was suspended for his remarks, but his actions raised the question: if prejudice is present in broadcast journalism regarding women’s college basketball away from the game, then why would prejudice regarding women’s college basketball not be present during the game?

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
In addition, the number of African American announcers has steadily risen in both men’s and women’s college basketball over the last decade.\textsuperscript{26} It is believed that a broader representation of announcers would allow for increased sensitivity to racial and gender stereotyping, and as a result, limit incidences of stereotyping.\textsuperscript{27}

\emph{Research Hypotheses}

This study sought to determine whether or not a racial bias still exists in men’s and women’s college basketball broadcasting in 2008. It also examined the extent of these biases in light of the racial demographics within the individual games that were studied.

The following research hypotheses were tested:

H1A: Announcers will make more positive statements than negative statements in men’s games.

H1B: Announcers will make more positive statements than negative statements in women’s games.

H2A1: Black male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to physical attributes than will white male players.

H2A2: Black female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to physical attributes than will white female players.

H2B1: White male players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to physical attributes than will black male players.

H2B2: White female players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to physical attributes than will black female players.

H3A1: Black male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to their physical abilities than will white male players.

\textsuperscript{26} Billings and Eastman, “Biased Voice of Sports: Racial and Gender Stereotyping in College Basketball Announcing,” 185.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
H3A2: Black female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to their physical abilities than will white female players.

H3B1: White male players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to their physical abilities than will black male players.

H3B2: White female players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to their physical abilities than will black female players.

H4A1: White male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to on-court intellect than will black male players.

H4A2: White female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to on-court intellect than will black female players.

H4B1: Black male players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to on-court intellect than will white male players.

H4B2: Black female players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to on-court intellect than will white female players.

H5A: White male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to off-court conduct than will black male players.

H5B: White female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to off-court conduct than will black female players.

H6A: White male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to hustle and hard work than will black male players.

H6B: White female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to hustle and hard work than will black female players.

H7A: White male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to shooting ability than will black male players.

H7B: White female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to shooting ability than will black female players.

H8A: Black male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to ability to drive to the basket than will black male players.

H8B: Black female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to ability to drive to the basket than will black female players.
Chapter 3: Method

For this study, games from the men’s and women’s 2008 NCAA tournaments were analyzed. Games from the Sweet 16 (eight games), Elite Eight (four games), Final Four (two games) and National Championship (one game) were intended to be coded for each sex. Two Sweet-16 games from the women’s tournament, however, were inaccessible. Therefore, a total of 28 games (15 men’s games and 13 women’s games) were studied.

The unit of analysis for this study was the comment. Games were recorded using TiVo and were coded at a later date. Coding taped games allowed for the opportunity to pause and rewind footage as needed. Games were taped in their entirety, but pre-game, halftime, and post-game comments were not coded because they lacked spontaneity. As stated previously, the main reason to use broadcast media – as opposed to print or online media – is because broadcasting allows for spontaneity. While a writer can think about the appropriate – and racially neutral – wording to describe a play or athlete, a commentator provides his or her immediate reaction to events as they unfold on the court. It is within this environment that stereotyping is most likely to occur.1 Comments made during cessation of play, however, were coded because they provided additional opportunity for analysis regarding recent developments within the game.

A coding sheet (see Appendix A) was used to identify variables such as commentator role, commentator’s race, and player’s race. The options for commentator role were play-by-play announcer, color commentator, and sideline reporter. The play-by-play broadcaster was the person who summarized the actions of the game as they

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unfold, while the color commentator provided analysis of those actions. A sideline reporter was the person located near the sideline who gave updates on each team, typically during timeouts or cessation of play. The options for commentator’s race were white male, black male, white female, and black female. This variable was coded to see if any relationships can be found between a commentator’s race and the likelihood of making racially charged comments. In addition, the names of commentators were also recorded to study tendencies of particular announcers. The possible options for player’s race, meanwhile, were white, black, Hispanic, Asian, and other. This variable was important because determining which races receive which types of comments served as the crux of the study.

Other important variables that were coded were physical attributes, physical abilities, on-court intellect, off-court intellect, and the nature of the comment. Physical attributes included a player’s height, weight, size, length (or wingspan, a fingertip-to-fingertip measurement of a particular player’s arm length), and other. If the broadcaster merely listed this information, however, the comment was not coded. For example, the statement “Player X is 6-8, 260” was not coded because it was a simple statement of fact, while the statement “At 6-8, 260, Player X is an absolute load in the paint” was coded because it provided opinion-based commentary regarding a player’s physical dimensions (see Appendix B for additional examples of comments that would be coded or not coded for other variables). Another option for physical attributes was “other,” which included comments regarding, for example, a wide body and broad shoulders.

The physical abilities variable consisted of comments referring to a particular player’s vertical leap, strength, speed, overall athletic ability, and other, which included
comments regarding, for example, a player’s versatility. In conjunction with the
previously mentioned physical abilities, several other variables were studied, including
comments referring to a player’s hustle, work ethic, shooting ability, and driving ability.
Such variables were studied to determine if Caucasians received a greater percentage of
comments traditionally associated with white players (that is, comments regarding hustle,
hard work, and shooting ability), and if African Americans received a greater percentage
of comments traditionally associated with black players (that is, comments regarding
vertical leap, strength, speed, overall athletic ability, and driving ability).

The on-court intellect variable included comments made about a player’s response
to events unfolding on the court; these comments involved some type of recognition,
vision, or decision-making. Because these comments varied greatly, the only options for
this category were “mentioned” and “not mentioned.” These variables were studied to
determine if white players received a greater percentage of comments relating to their
ability to out-think and out-hustle “physically superior” opponents.

Variables concerning conduct were also studied. On-court conduct referred to
comments made about a player’s team play; that is, comments referring to leadership,
character, unselfishness, etc. The off-court conduct variable described comments made
about a player’s life away from the court. The three main categories for this variable
were comments pertaining to academics (one’s work in the classroom), character (one’s
morality and values), and personal interest stories (one’s personal life). This variable was
studied to determine if white players would receive a greater percentage of positive
comments pertaining to off-court conduct and if black players would receive a greater
percentage of negative comments pertaining to their lives away from the court.
The nature of the comment (positive, negative, or a mix of the two) will be studied. Only comments made about individual players were coded (i.e. “Wisconsin is a very smart basketball team” will not be coded, but “Player X is a very smart basketball player” were coded). In addition, only comments that refer to players in the current game being studied will be coded (i.e. comments referring to other players across the country were not coded).

A few variables – such as case number, round (Sweet 16, Elite Eight, Final Four and Championship), date, and teams playing – were tracked for general organization when entering and analyzing data. In addition, each comment that was coded was logged, which allowed for analysis of specific comments where appropriate.

It should be noted that only the races of starting players were tallied for this study. The reasons for this were two-fold. First, starting players tend to play most of the game, and as a result, have more opportunity to receive comments. Secondly, many reserve players often enter games during “garbage time” (the remaining minutes of the game when the outcome has already been decided) or for brief spurts to temporarily relieve starters. Because these players have a relatively small chance of receiving pertinent comments, their inclusion in the study could have yielded misleading results when calculating the racial breakdown of players.

Three coders viewed two of the games – one for each sex – included in the study. The coders – white males who varied in age from 23 to 30 – were journalism graduate students at a Midwestern university. Intercoder reliability for selecting comments was 98.3 percent. Reliability for the comments coded by all three coders, based on a
percentage of agreement, was 99.6 percent. Overall, intercoder reliability for this study was 95.6 percent.
Chapter 4: Results

Overall, this study found that commentators applied racially based stereotypes when assessing and evaluating black and white basketball players of both sexes. Black male players were generally depicted as possessing more physical attributes and physical abilities, while white male players were seen as making intellectually sound basketball decisions complemented by a stellar work ethic and proficient shooting ability. Like their male counterparts, black female players tended to be praised for their physical attributes and abilities, while white female players were lauded for their shooting ability and work ethic. White females, however, were not praised for their on-court intellect nearly as frequently as anticipated.

Of the 150 starting players featured in games from the men’s tournament, 117 (78 percent) were black, 27 (18 percent) were white, four were Hispanic (3 percent), and two were “other” (1 percent). Of the 130 starting players featured in games from the women’s tournament, 105 (81 percent) were black, 22 (17 percent) were white, one was Hispanic (less than 1 percent), and 2 were “other” (1.5 percent).

Because 78 percent of the men’s players were African American, one might expect black male players to receive 78 percent of positive and negative comments for each variable (i.e. 78 percent of positive comments referring to physical abilities, 78 percent of negative comments referring to physical abilities, etc.) Similarly, because 18 percent of the men’s players were white, one might expect white male players to receive 18 percent of the positive and negative comments for each variable. The same logic applies to female basketball players; one might expect black female players to receive 81 percent of comments for each variable and for white female players to receive 17 percent
of comments for each variable. Blacks and whites comprised 144 of the 150 men’s players (96 percent) and 127 of the 130 women’s players (98 percent); comments addressing all other players were disregarded because they would not allow for meaningful analysis.

A total of 16 different analysts were featured in this study (eight for the men’s tournament games and eight for the women’s tournament games). Each analyst in the men’s games was male; six were white, and two were black. Four played collegiate basketball, one of whom was once a head coach at the collegiate level, while another was once an assistant coach at the collegiate level. The eight men’s analysts were Jay Bilas, Len Elmore, Dick Enberg, Gus Johnson, Verne Lundquist, Jim Nantz, Billy Packer, and Bill Raftery. Four analysts were play-by-play announcers (Enberg, Johnson, Lundquist, and Nantz), and four provided color commentary (Bilas, Elmore, Packer, and Raftery). Each play-by-play announcer and color commentary announcer had an assigned partner throughout the tournament: Dick Enberg and Jay Bilas, Gus Johnson and Len Elmore, Verne Lundquist and Bill Raftery, and Jim Nantz and Billy Packer were partners. The teams of Enberg and Bilas, Johnson and Elmore, and Lundquist and Raftery all announced three games each. The team of Nantz and Packer announced six games, including both Final Four games and the National Championship.

The women’s analysts featured two white males, one black male, four white females, and one black female. Both the black female and one of the white females were former players and head coaches (at the collegiate level and professional level, respectively). Another white female was once a coach at the collegiate level. The eight women’s analysts were Debbie Antonelli, Doris Burke, Eric Collins, Nancy Lieberman,
Dave Pasch, Mike Patrick, Carolyn Peck, and Pam Ward. Four analysts were play-by-play announcers (Collins, Pasch, Patrick, and Ward), and four provided color commentary (Antonelli, Burke, Lieberman, and Peck). Each play-by-play announcer and color commentary announcer had an assigned partner throughout the tournament: Eric Collins and Carolyn Peck, Dave Pasch and Debbie Antonelli, Mike Patrick and Doris Burke, and Pam Ward and Nancy Lieberman were partners. The team of Collins and Peck announced two games, while the teams of Pasch and Antonelli and Ward and Lieberman each announced three games. The team of Patrick and Burke announced five games, including both Final Four games and the National Championship. Because sideline reporters made such a small number of coded comments for each sex (less than one percent), data about their comments were discarded from the study because they would not allow for meaningful analysis.

**Hypothesis 1A, which said that announcers will make more positive statements than negative statements in men’s games, was supported.** Of the 611 coded comments, 507 (83 percent) were positive, 85 (14 percent) were negative, and 19 (three percent) were mixed. Play-by-play announcers made 129 of the 611 (21 percent) comments; of the 129 comments, 123 (95 percent) were positive, four (3 percent) were negative, and two (2 percent) were mixed. Color commentary announcers made 482 of the 611 (79 percent) comments; 384 (80 percent) were positive, 81 (17 percent) were negative, and 17 (3 percent) were mixed. Included within these calculations were three comments that involved quoting or paraphrasing the opinions of credible sources (a coach or family member).
Hypothesis 1B, which said that announcers will make more positive statements than negative statements in women’s games, was supported. Of the 378 coded comments, 320 (85 percent) were positive, 42 (11 percent) were negative, and 16 (4 percent) were mixed. Play-by-play announcers made 146 of the 378 (39 percent) comments; 116 (79 percent) were positive, 22 (15 percent) were negative, and eight (5 percent) were mixed. Color commentary announcers made 232 of the 378 (61 percent) comments; 204 (88 percent) were positive, 20 (9 percent) were negative, and eight (3 percent) were mixed. Included within these calculations were two comments that involved quoting or paraphrasing the opinions of a credible source (a coach or family member).

It is worth noting that the total number of comments for each variable for all players of different races, when combined, exceeds the total number of coded comments from both the men’s and women’s games (611 and 378, respectively). This is due to the fact that more than one variable could have been represented in a single coded comment. Suppose a play-by-play announcer says, for example, “Player A is extremely strong and quick.” This statement would only be coded as one comment, but it would be tallied for two different variables (strength and speed). When adding up comments made about physical abilities such as strength and speed, then, this individual comment would be counted twice.

Hypothesis 2A1, which said that black male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to physical attributes than will white male players, was supported. Black male players received 105 of 126 (83 percent) positive comments referring to physical attributes; they also received 60 of 67 (90
Table 1: Positive and Negative Comments by Player Race, 2008 Men’s NCAA Tournament, Sweet 16 to National Championship (15 Games)

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<th>Negative</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
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<td>Physical Attribute</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1 (100%)</td>
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<td>22 (76%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
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<td>Physical Ability</td>
<td>158 (90%)</td>
<td>18 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical Leap</td>
<td>19 (86%)</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>54 (89%)</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>65 (93%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athleticism</td>
<td>7 (78%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13 (93%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>19 (43%)</td>
<td>25 (57%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hustle</td>
<td>12 (44%)</td>
<td>15 (56%)</td>
<td>3 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>7 (41%)</td>
<td>10 (59%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>21 (49%)</td>
<td>22 (51%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting</td>
<td>16 (42%)</td>
<td>22 (58%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
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<td>Driving</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct</td>
<td>9 (50%)</td>
<td>9 (50%)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
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<td>On-Court Conduct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Off-Court Conduct</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>7 (78%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Court Intellect</td>
<td>67 (61%)</td>
<td>42 (39%)</td>
<td>46 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>379 (73%)</td>
<td>137 (27%)</td>
<td>67 (82%)</td>
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</table>

percent) positive comments referring to height and length (see table 1). In addition, 15 of 16 (94 percent) positive comments made by play-by-play announcers regarding physical attributes were directed toward black players (see table 2).

H2A2, which said that black female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to physical attributes than will white female players, was supported. Black female players received 65 of 71 (92 percent) comments...
referring to physical attributes, including all 11 positive comments for length (see table 3). In addition, 95 percent of positive comments made by play-by-play announcers
Table 2: Positive and Negative Comment Attribution by Announcer Role of Broadcasters and Race of Players, 2008 Men’s NCAA Tournament, Sweet 16 to National Championship (15 Games)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Attribute</th>
<th>Positive</th>
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<th>Color Commentary</th>
<th>Physical Ability</th>
<th>Vertical Leap</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Athleticism</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Effort</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Color Commentary</td>
<td>Play-by-Play</td>
<td>Color Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Physical Ability</td>
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<td>5 (28%)</td>
<td>171 (74%)</td>
<td>13 (72%)</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>9 (47%)</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>10 (19%)</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vertical Leap</td>
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<td>9 (47%)</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>10 (19%)</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
<td>44 (81%)</td>
<td>4 (57%)</td>
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<td>3 (43%)</td>
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<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>50 (77%)</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>15 (23%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>50 (77%)</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>15 (23%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
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<td>15 (79%)</td>
<td>18 (72%)</td>
<td>3 (62%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Skill</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shooting</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>4 (44%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>81 (21%)</td>
<td>298 (79%)</td>
<td>103 (75%)</td>
<td>18 (27%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
regarding physical attributes were directed at black players, including all positive comments for height, weight, size, and length (see table 4).

**Hypothesis 2B1**, which said that white male players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to physical attributes than will black male players, was supported. White male players received five of 13 (38 percent) negative comments regarding physical attributes; all five of these comments referred to size (table 1). Although relatively few negative comments were made regarding physical attributes, commentators directed these comments at white players more frequently than expected.

**Hypothesis 2B2**, which said that white female players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to physical attributes than will black female players, was supported. White female players received two of 10 (20 percent) negative comments referring to physical attributes (table 3). This percentage does not stray far from the expected proportion (17 percent), but is nevertheless slightly higher than anticipated.

**Hypothesis 3A1**, which said that black male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to their physical abilities than will white male players, was supported. Black male players received 158 of 176 (90 percent) positive comments referring to physical abilities, including 65 of 70 (93 percent) related to speed (table 1). In addition, 171 of 184 (93 percent) of positive comments made by color commentary announcers involving physical abilities were directed at black players,
including 44 of 48 (92 percent) of comments regarding strength and 50 of 54 (93 percent) of comments regarding speed (table 2).

Hypothesis 3A2, which said that black female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to their physical abilities than will white female players, was supported. Black female players received 115 of 119 (97 percent) positive comments referring to physical abilities, including all 18 positive comments pertaining to leaping ability, all 29 positive comments pertaining to speed, and 27 of 28
(96 percent) positive comments referring to athleticism (table 3). All six comments regarding strength made by play-by-play announcers were positive and directed toward black female players (table 4).
Table 4: Positive and Negative Comment Attribution by Announcer Role of Broadcasters and Race of Players; 2008 Women’s NCAA Tournament, Sweet 16 to National Championship (13 Games)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Physical Attribute</th>
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<td>Length</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Ability</td>
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<td>1 (25%)</td>
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<td>Vertical Leap</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>6 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>11 (38%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athleticism</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>14 (54%)</td>
<td>8 (80%)</td>
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Table 4: continued

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<th>Category</th>
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<th>Skill</th>
<th>Shooting</th>
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<td>12 (31%)</td>
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<td>9 (59%)</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
<td>5 (63%)</td>
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<td>5 (63%)</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>112 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>112 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (50%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>112 (38%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis 3B1, which said that white male players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to their physical abilities than will black male players, was supported. White male players received three of seven (43 percent) negative comments referring to physical abilities, including the only negative comment pertaining to overall athleticism (table 1). As was the case with the data related to Hypothesis 2B1, relatively few negative comments were made regarding physical abilities. When these comments were made, however, commentators directed these statements at white players more frequently than expected.

Hypothesis 3B2, which said that white female players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to their physical abilities than will black female players, was supported. White female players received five of seven (71 percent) negative comments regarding physical abilities, including all negative comments for strength and overall athleticism (table 3). Again, negative comments regarding physical abilities were few and far between; when made, however, they were directed toward white players at a rate higher than anticipated.

Hypothesis 4A1, which said that white male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to on-court intellect than will black male players, was supported. White male players received 42 of 109 (39 percent) positive comments referring to on-court intellect, including nine of 19 (47 percent) positive comments made by play-by-play announcers (tables 1 and 2, respectively).
Hypothesis 4A2, which said that white female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to on-court intellect than will black female players, was not supported. In fact, white female players received far fewer positive comments regarding on-court intellect than one would expect; despite comprising 17 percent of the population, white females received just four of 43 (nine percent) positive comments referring to on-court intellect (table 3).

Hypothesis 4B1, which said that black male players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to on-court intellect than will white male players, was supported. Black male players received 46 of 50 (92 percent) negative comments referring to on-court intellect (table 1). Color commentary analysts made 45 of these 46 (98 percent) comments; in addition, 45 of their 49 (92 percent) negative comments directed toward African Americans pertained to on-court intellect (table 2).

Hypothesis 4B2, which said that black female players will receive a greater percentage of negative comments pertaining to on-court intellect than will white female players, was supported. Black female players received 10 of 12 (83 percent) negative comments referring to on-court intellect (table 3). Again, relatively few negative comments were made regarding on-court intellect, but black female players received a higher percentage than expected.

Hypothesis 5A, which said that white male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to off-court conduct than will black male players, was supported. White male players received seven of nine (78 percent) positive comments regarding off-court conduct; in addition, a black male player received
the only negative comment referring to off-court conduct (table 1). Black players, however, received seven of nine (78 percent) positive comments referring to on-court conduct; the majority of these comments pertained to leadership ability.

**Hypothesis 5B, which said that white female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to off-court conduct than will black female players, was not supported.** White players did not receive any positive comments referring to off-court conduct. In fact, black females received all nine comments pertaining to off-court conduct; eight were positive and one was negative (table 3). Black females, however, received 22 of 23 (96 percent) comments pertaining to on-court conduct; the majority of these comments pertained to leadership ability.

**Hypothesis 6A, which said that white male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to hustle and hard work than will black male players, was supported.** White male players received 25 of 44 (57 percent) positive comments regarding hustle and hard work; in addition, black male players received all four negative comments pertaining to hustle and hard work (table 1).

**Hypothesis 6B, which said that white female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to hustle and hard work than will black female players, was supported.** White female players received 10 of 36 (28 percent) positive comments referring to hustle and hard work. Black female players received the only two negative comments pertaining to hustle and hard work (table 3).

**Hypothesis 7A, which said that white male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to shooting ability than will black male
players, was supported. White male players received 22 of 38 (58 percent) positive comments referring to shooting ability (table 1).

**Hypothesis 7B, which said that white female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to shooting ability than will black female players, was supported.** White female players received 15 of 32 (47 percent) positive comments referring to shooting ability (table 3).

**Hypothesis 8A, which said that black male players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to their driving-to-the-basket ability than will white male players, was supported.** Black male players received all five positive comments referring to driving-to-the-basket ability (table 1).

**Hypothesis 8B, which said that black female players will receive a greater percentage of positive comments pertaining to driving-to-the-basket ability than will white female players, was supported.** Black female players received all four positive comments regarding driving ability. In addition, black female players received all eight positive comments for ball-handling (tracked under “other” physical abilities) skills, as well as four positive comments regarding body control and ability to finish near the rim. White female players received the only two negative comments for driving ability (table 3).

Taken as a whole, the data indicated that racial stereotyping remains prevalent in college basketball broadcasting. Some announcers, however, were more responsible than others for instances of racial stereotyping. One such announcer was men’s color commentary analyst Billy Packer, who alone accounted for 68 of 105 (65 percent) positive comments directed at African Americans regarding physical attributes, 17 of 21
(81 percent) positive comments for weight, 14 of 17 (82 percent) comments for size, and 29 of 39 (74 percent) positive comments for length (see table 5). In addition, he accounted for 65 of 158 (41 percent) of positive comments directed at African Americans regarding physical abilities, including 32 of 54 (59 percent) regarding strength (table 5).
Table 5: Positive Comment Distribution for African Americans Players by Announcer Name, Men’s 2008 NCAA Tournament, Sweet 16 to National Championship (15 Games)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Attribute</th>
<th>Enberg</th>
<th>Bilas</th>
<th>Johnson</th>
<th>Elmore</th>
<th>Nantz</th>
<th>Packer</th>
<th>Lundquist</th>
<th>Raferty</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>1 (&lt;1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
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<td>(17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
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<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>14 (81%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>74 (46%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
<td>(14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>14 (9%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>7 (32%)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Ability</td>
<td>7 (4%)</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
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<td>21 (13%)</td>
<td>65 (41%)</td>
<td>8 (5%)</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical Leap</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (21%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>4 (21%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>11 (11%)</td>
<td>6 (59%)</td>
<td>32 (38%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>(17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>11 (17%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athleticism</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>(71%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>(23%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>(32%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
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</table>
Table 5: continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hustle</th>
<th>1 (8%)</th>
<th>1 (8%)</th>
<th>0 (0%)</th>
<th>2 (17%)</th>
<th>2 (17%)</th>
<th>4 (33%)</th>
<th>0 (0%)</th>
<th>2 (17%)</th>
<th>12</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard Work</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (71%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skill</strong></td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (10%)</td>
<td>9 (43%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shooting</strong></td>
<td>3 (19%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (31%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>3 (19%)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Driving</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
<td>5 (14%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-Court Conduct</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Off-Court Conduct</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (57%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-Court Intellect</strong></td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>5 (7%)</td>
<td>33 (49%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>11 (29%)</td>
<td>67 (18%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>21 (6%)</td>
<td>49 (13%)</td>
<td>11 (3%)</td>
<td>13 (3%)</td>
<td>38 (10%)</td>
<td>184 (49%)</td>
<td>11 (3%)</td>
<td>52 (14%)</td>
<td>379</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56
Packer was also responsible for four of five (80 percent) positive comments directed at African Americans for driving-to-the-basket ability (table 5).

Packer also provided a large proportion of negative comments for African American players. Overall, he was responsible for 50 of 68 (74 percent) of all negative comments attributed to African American players, including 29 of 45 (64 percent) comments pertaining to on-court intellect (table 5). Packer also made all four negative comments related to the hustle and hard work of African American players (table 5).

Granted, Packer, along with Jim Nantz, announced six games – double that of any other broadcast team in this study. Therefore, one would expect him to provide the most comments for variables across the board. Still, Packer accounted for far more positive comments regarding black players than anticipated; because he served as color commentary announcer in 40 percent of the games, Packer would be expected to make 40 percent of all positive comments attributed to color commentary analysts. Among color commentary analysts, however, Packer made 68 of 90 (76 percent) positive comments for African Americans pertaining to physical attributes and 65 of 134 (49 percent) for physical abilities. Not all of his commentary, however, was indicative of racial stereotyping. For example, he did provide 33 of 67 (49 percent) positive comments for African American players relating to on-court intellect (table 5). Yet, by and large Packer contributed far more than his fair share of seemingly racially based commentary.

An individual broadcaster in the women’s game, meanwhile, did not drastically influence the results of this study as did Packer. On the one hand, the lack of a decidedly race-focused commentator in women’s basketball may be viewed positively. On the other hand, the racial bias found in women’s college basketball was not due to a single
announcer, but rather to announcers as a whole. The closest the women’s game came to a Packer-like broadcaster was Doris Burke, who announced 5 of 13 (38 percent) women’s games in this study, meaning that Burke would be expected to make 38 percent of all positive and negative comments across the board among women’s color commentary analysts. Yet, Burke made 29 of 47 (62 percent) positive comments regarding physical attributes of African American players, including 16 of 21 (76 percent) positive comments for height (see table 6). Burke also made 43 of 83 (52 percent) of positive comments regarding physical abilities of black players, including eight of 15 (53 percent) for vertical leap and 10 of 17 (59 percent) for speed (table 6). In addition, Burke made all four positive comments for black females that pertained to driving ability (table 6).

Thus, both the men’s and women’s games featured commentators who made more stereotypical comments than one would expect. The overall data, however, serve as evidence for stereotyping among commentators for players of both sexes.
Table 6: Positive Comment Distribution for African American Players by Announcer Name, 2008 Women’s NCAA Tournament, Sweet 16 to Championship Game (13 Games)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Attribute</th>
<th>Commentator</th>
<th>Patrick</th>
<th>Burke</th>
<th>Pasch</th>
<th>Antonelli</th>
<th>Collins</th>
<th>Peck</th>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Liberman</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
<td>29 (45%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>6 (9%)</td>
<td>11 (17%)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (63%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>4 (36%)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Physical</td>
<td>Physical Ability</td>
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<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vertical Leap</td>
<td>21 (18%)</td>
<td>43 (37%)</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>17 (15%)</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
<td>7 (6%)</td>
<td>4 (3%)</td>
<td>16 (14%)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>8 (44%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>10 (47%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
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<td>8 (28%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athleticism</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (11%)</td>
<td>8 (30%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>10 (37%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>15 (52%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 (27%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
<td>3 (12%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hustle</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
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<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>(31%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill</td>
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<td>7 (33%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
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<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>3 (18%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shooting</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>(100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conduct</strong></td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (18%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>(18%)</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conduct</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intellect</strong></td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
<td>9 (23%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>58 (20%)</td>
<td>96 (32%)</td>
<td>11 (4%)</td>
<td>34 (11%)</td>
<td>8 (3%)</td>
<td>26 (9%)</td>
<td>19 (6%)</td>
<td>44 (15%)</td>
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Chapter 5: Discussion

Overall, this study found that college basketball commentators portrayed black players as physically superior athletes relying on their natural physical attributes and abilities to succeed on the court; white players, meanwhile, were portrayed as intellectually superior individuals (at least, in the men’s game) who used their hustle, hard work, and shooting ability to overcome perceived physical limitations in order to compete with physically superior black athletes. Black players of both sexes received an overwhelming majority of positive comments for physical attributes and physical abilities. Black males received 263 of 302 (87 percent) combined positive comments for attributes and abilities, and black females received 180 of 190 (95 percent) comments for attributes and abilities (tables 1 and 3, respectively). Conversely, white players of both sexes received negative comments pertaining to physical attributes and physical abilities at a rate higher than expected. White males received 8 of 20 (40 percent) negative comments pertaining to physical attributes and physical abilities, and white females received six of 16 (38 percent) negative comments pertaining to physical attributes and abilities (tables 1 and 3, respectively). Although negative comments occurred far less frequently than positive comments for each of these two variables, the fact remains that commentators referenced the perceived physical deficiencies and limitations of white players far more often than anticipated.

Even when commentators did acknowledge the physical attributes and abilities of white players in a positive manner, they did so under conspicuously suspicious circumstances. For example, white male players received just 12 of 131 (9 percent) positive comments for strength and speed – compared to 119 (91 percent) for black male
players (table 1). Five (42 percent) of the 12 comments occurred when the white player was being guarded by another white player. That the comments praising white male players for strength and speed were few and far between is without question. Yet, might the presence of a white defender – someone generally perceived as physically inferior – have spurred the praise of another white player’s strength or speed? The fact that white males comprised just 18 percent of male players in this study – coupled with the fact that nearly half the time when they were praised for their strength and speed, they were being guarded by another white player – suggests that such a conclusion is not entirely without merit.

On the rare occasion that a white male was praised for his physical abilities when being guarded by a black male, it was done with peculiar phrasing. For example, white males received five of 70 (7 percent) positive comments for speed (table 1). One white male player, guard Jason Richards of Davidson, received two of these comments, but neither comment was altogether flattering. One comment occurred moments after Richards scored on a driving lay-up while being guarded by Sherron Collins, an African American guard for Kansas. The color commentator announcer, Len Elmore, said, “At first blush, Richards doesn't look like he has the foot speed to get by Collins, but if Collins does anything to gamble or does anything but stay low and keep his center of gravity down so he can stay with him, then Richards will get past him.” Based on this comment, it seems that Richard’s dribble-drive field goal had less to do with his own speed and more to do with the poor defensive execution of Collins. Richards is listed as 6-2 and 185 pounds – measurements that certainly do not deviate to any significant degree from the average guard. In addition, Richards was the starting guard for a team
that was playing for a trip to the Final Four, so it would be foolhardy to think that he is not athletic and talented. What basis, then, did Elmore have to assert that Richards would not have the foot speed to get past Collins, a starting guard for a team also vying for the Final Four? It is not unreasonable to presume that the commentator considered the race of each player before making this judgment “at first blush.” By driving past Collins, Richards showed that he had comparable – if not superior – speed, but Elmore implied that Collins either gambled too much on defense or did not stay low enough in his stance to keep Richards in front of him. In reality, perhaps Richards was just faster. Later in the same game, Richards was described as “deceptively quick.” What about Richards made him “deceptively” fast? In this study, black males received 65 positive comments pertaining to speed – thirteen times as many as white male players – and not one black player was ever described as “deceptively” quick.

There was also a difference in the perceived athleticism of black male and white male players. Black male players received comments praising their overall athleticism such as, “Player A is such a great athlete,” “Player A is a spectacular athlete,” and “You know what an athlete Player A is.” White male players received two positive comments pertaining to athleticism, which were both ascribed to the same player. The two comments were, “[Washington State University guard Taylor] Rochesti is such a clever player, and is more athletic than he gets credit for,” and “Rochesti gives such great effort on the court; he’s an outstanding athlete.” Rather than just praising the player for his athleticism – which is what the announcers did for black male players – these comments link the athleticism of the white male player to his “clever” thinking and “great effort,” both of which are stereotypes associated with white players. When black male players
were perceived as athletic, they were praised for being just that – regardless of basketball intelligence or effort. White male players, however, were not.

Men’s commentators also differed in the praise doled out to players of both races for their hard work – not only in frequency, but also in connotation. White male players received 10 of 17 (59 percent) positive comments pertaining to hard work (table 1). The overwhelming majority of comments received by white players (relative to population representation), however, was not the most striking facet of this finding; rather, that distinction belonged to the attitudes with which commentators varied in their praise for players of different races. For example, the following comments represent four of the seven positive comments that were attributed to black male players for their hard work:

- “That time, Player A worked really hard to get the ball and get his shot off.”
- “Player A’s work ethic has really improved.”
- “Player A’s work ethic is getting better.”
- “Player A is finally working hard for the ball inside.”

Compare the above comments with the following comments that were attributed to white male players:

- “Player A never gives up and never takes a play off.”
- “You never see Player A outworked.”
- “Player A has really worked on it and is now a more confident shooter.”
- “Player A works so hard; he never takes a play off.”

At first glance, these comments may not appear to differ significantly. Upon further inspection, however, striking contradictions emerged. The nature of the comments about black players insinuated that their hard work was short-lived, inconsistent, or still left something to be desired. To say that a player worked hard “that time” implies that working hard is something that the player does not typically do or does not do with any...
kind of regularity. Similarly, to say that a player is “finally working hard” insinuates that he previously was not. In addition, to say that a player’s work ethic has “improved” or “is getting better” is not necessarily the same thing as saying, “He has a good work ethic.” The hard work of white players, meanwhile, was seen as endless, ever-present, and exemplary. To say that a player “never gives up,” “never takes a play off,” is “never outworked,” and “works so hard” implies that such a work ethic is stable and constant. In addition, one of the above comments suggested that the player was a more confident shooter because he put the work in to become a more confident shooter. His confidence had neither “improved,” nor was it “getting better.” Rather, it was already good, and it was the direct result of his work ethic. Thus, announcers were stingy in the amount of praise they afforded black male players for their hard work. Even when they provided this praise, however, the attitude with which they provided it tended to make the comment more a criticism than a commendation.

This study also suggested that black players are typically seen as more capable than white players of contributing to their teams in a variety of ways. Black male players, for example, received four positive comments regarding versatility, while white male players received none (table 1). Black male players received comments such as “There [you can see] the versatility of Player A” and “[This team] needs Player A’s versatility.” The fact that white male players did not receive any positive comments regarding versatility implies that they are not typically seen as players who can impact a game in a variety of ways.

The same trend was found in the women’s game. Black female players received 11 comments praising their versatility and all-around talent, while white female players
received only one such comment (table 3). For example, black females received comments such as, “Player A is such a great all-around player” and “Player A is one of the most versatile players around.” The fact that white female players received only eight percent of positive comments pertaining to versatility indicates that announcers either do not see – or do not acknowledge – the all-around skills of the white female basketball player. Granted, comments regarding versatility did not occur at a particularly high rate for either sex. Yet, it should come as no surprise that when such comments did occur, they were attributed to black players 94 percent of the time. As shown, announcers clearly perceive black players as possessing more physical attributes and physical abilities than do white players. It follows that announcers would also likely view individual black players as possessing a variety of skills more often than they would view individual white players as possessing such a plethora of attributes and abilities.

As mentioned, the women’s game was not exempt from racial stereotypes and classifications among broadcasters. In fact, stereotyping was in many ways more prevalent in women’s basketball than in men’s basketball. Black females received an overwhelming majority of positive comments pertaining to physical attributes and physical abilities (92 percent and 97 percent, respectively), including 96 percent of comments relating to athleticism, 100 percent of positive comments relating to vertical leap, and 100 percent of comments relating to speed (table 3). Black females received all four positive comments relating to driving-to-the-basket ability, and – despite comprising 81 percent of the population – received just 17 of 32 (53 percent) positive comments referring to shooting ability (table 3).
As stated in the methods section, only comments referring to individual players were coded. Comments referring to teams (i.e. Team A is very athletic) were not coded. In the women’s title game, however, announcers often commented on the perceived physical superiority of one team (Tennessee) over the other (Stanford). All five starting players for Tennessee were black; while Stanford started two black players and three white players. Each team had two bench players log at least ten minutes of playing time during the game. One of the two bench players for Tennessee was white; both of the bench players for Stanford were white. All other players who appeared in the game for either team entered the contest in the final minute of play when the outcome of the game had already been decided. Thus, six of the seven players featured in Tennessee’s rotation were black, while five of the seven players featured in Stanford’s rotation were white. Throughout the game, Tennessee was repeatedly praised for its perceived physical superiority over Stanford. For example:

- “Except for Wiggins [an African American starting guard for Stanford], Tennessee is quicker.”
- “Stanford cannot keep up with the quickness of Tennessee.”
- “[Tennessee Head Coach] Pat Summit's guards are much more athletic and have much better speed [than Stanford’s guards].”
- “This is a Stanford team that doesn't have the players that can go by you off the dribble because the athleticism, the speed, and the length of Tennessee is having an impact.”
- “At virtually every position, [Tennessee has] size, they have speed, and they have athleticism.”
- “Stanford does not have players that can dribble drive, and they can't create on their own and go on their own. And with all of that length, [Tennessee is] getting in the passing lanes.”
- “Tennessee knows with its athleticism that it's to their advantage to pressure the ball.”
- “Wiggins is the only player on the floor for Stanford who has a chance to dribble out of trouble.”
- “[Stanford] is not a team that has explosive athletes who can score quickly.”
“Stanford has 19 turnovers against a team that has superior athleticism.”
“[Stanford doesn't] have the athletes to go by [Tennessee].”
“[Tennessee is] so much quicker than Stanford is at every position
“The quickness of Tennessee has been the key to this game; if you look at a stat, quickness has been the key to it.”
“Stanford doesn’t have great speed to trap [the ball]; [they] don't have incredible lock-down one-on-one players.”

Tennessee won this game. These comments, however, were gross oversimplifications for the reasons in which they won. Tennessee certainly boasted many players in possession of first-rate physical ability; otherwise they would not have won a national championship. But did physical ability alone win them that championship? Based on the comments of the broadcasters, Mike Patrick and Doris Burke – who combined to make more than a dozen comments generalizing the perceived physical superiority of Tennessee over Stanford – the answer is yes. In addition, reiterating that a predominantly white team does not have “explosive athletes” or is unable to “keep up with the quickness” of a predominantly black team provides further fodder for racial stereotypes. Stanford defeated predominantly black teams in the three tournament games leading up to the National Championship, and they clearly had players with the athleticism and speed to do so.

Patrick and Burke were discrete in some of their comments; in others, they were not. For example, it is one thing to say, “[Stanford] is not a team that has explosive athletes who can score quickly,” or “Stanford cannot keep up with the quickness of Tennessee.” It is quite another to say, “Except for Wiggins, Tennessee is quicker,” or “Wiggins is the only player on the floor for Stanford who has a chance to dribble out of trouble” when Wiggins was the only black player in the game for Stanford and every player for Tennessee was black. Before the second half began – when Stanford trailed by
only eight points – Mike Patrick said, “Stanford isn't going to be any more athletic coming out, but let's see if they're smarter.” This comment suggested that Stanford would have to overcome its physical limitations with improved decision-making to have any chance to win.

Whether directed at players or teams, it was evident that racial stereotyping was present in women’s basketball. One striking difference between the men’s and women’s games, however, dealt with comments referring to on-court intellect. As predicted, white males received a large proportion – 39 percent – of positive comments referring to on-court intellect (table 1). White females, meanwhile, were severely underrepresented in this category of praise, garnering just nine percent of these comments (table 3). One possible explanation was the hesitance of women’s basketball commentators to make comments pertaining to on-court intellect at all. The men’s games yielded 109 positive on-court intellect comments, while the women’s games yielded just 39 (tables 1 and 3, respectively). Another explanation was the tendency for women’s basketball commentators to make collectivist – rather than individualistic – comments. As shown previously, women’s commentators certainly did not shy away from praising or critiquing teams as a whole, rather than focusing on one particular player. Granted, two fewer women’s games were coded than men’s games, but that alone cannot explain the disparity between the numbers of comments made for on-court intellect for each sex. Regardless of the quantity of comments, the fact that black female players received 91 percent of positive comments regarding on-court intellect revealed that commentators were willing to extol African American females for their exceptional decision-making (table 3).
Another striking difference between the sexes was found in comments relating to conduct both on and off the court. In the men’s games, black males received 78 percent of positive comments relating to on-court conduct – exactly the amount one would expect based on representation within the population. In terms of off-court conduct, however, the percentages were reversed; white males received 78 percent of positive comments (table 1). This disparity suggested that either black male players do not perform noteworthy achievements off the basketball court, or men’s broadcasters simply do not acknowledge them. Based on the numbers of comments during the women’s games, it could very well be the latter. In addition to receiving 96 percent of positive comments pertaining to on-court conduct, black females also garnered all eight positive comments pertaining to off-court conduct (table 3). African American males were not only underrepresented in positive comments referring to off-court conduct, but also attracted the only negative comment regarding off-court conduct. Thus, broadcasters continued to stereotype black males in comments referring to off-court conduct; black females, meanwhile, received no such treatment.

Interestingly, the group that received the worst representation may have been white females, who were not stereotyped, but rather forgotten altogether. The only two hypotheses in this study that were not supported pertained to white females. These findings may indicate vestiges of indifference to women’s athletics and inability to acknowledge women for their athletic achievements. After all, white females received just one comment – positive or negative – regarding conduct on and off the court. They were stereotyped as anticipated in other categories; among them were hustle, hard work, and shooting ability. Still, positive comments from these three categories (25 of 40)
comprised 63 percent of all positive comments attributed to white females, who received just 12 percent (40 of 336) of positive comments combined. Thus, white female players, when recognized, were seen almost exclusively as making stereotyped contributions to their teams through hustle, hard work, and stellar marksmanship.

Overall, the data provided evidence for the existence of stereotyping among both men’s and women’s college basketball broadcasters. Requests of Billy Packer and Doris Burke for interviews about their reactions to these results were refused.
Chapter 6: Conclusions, Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Conclusions

College basketball broadcasters continue to stereotype black and white basketball players of both sexes in comments pertaining – but not limited – to physical attributes, physical abilities, hustle, hard work, and shooting ability. This bias undermines the racial equality – and numerical superiority – that black players have gained on the court. If African Americans cannot achieve true equality in an area of society in which they have gained acceptance based on merit, where can they hope to achieve it? These stereotypes do not adhere to the philosophies of Lippmann and Tuchman – among others – and can influence the ways in which people view African Americans not only as athletes, but also as people. Because of this, it is imperative to refrain from relying on racial stereotypes to guide assessments and evaluations of particular players.

Sports announcers must take some accountability for this societal ill and alter the ways in which they announce games. As has been evidenced by experiments, fans often rely on stereotypes to guide their interpretations and assessments of players of certain races. When evaluating an athlete’s ability or performance, commentators, fans and casual observers should do just that; rather than giving a skin-deep, stereotyped assessment of a player, one should judge the player based on the ability that he or she displays – and not on the ability that one assumes or thinks he or she displays. That there exist black basketball players with breathtaking athleticism and physical abilities and white basketball players with phenomenal decision-making skills and shooting accuracy is without question – and they should be recognized for that. But must they be recognized for only that? To recognize black players almost exclusively for their
physical abilities implies that they possess neither basketball intelligence nor a strong work ethic. Conversely, to recognize white players almost exclusively for their hustle, hard work, and decision-making skills implies that they possess neither athleticism nor exceptional physical abilities. Simply put, these stereotypes are an insult and disservice to players of both races. Changing the ways in which athletes of different races are characterized can influence the ways in which people of different races are viewed. Eliminating racial stereotypes in college basketball, then, is one small step toward eliminating racial stereotypes in society and creating a world not blinded by color, but rather, colorblind.

Limitations

This study was not without limitations. First, analyzing games from the later rounds of the men’s and women’s tournaments allowed for limited variety in the number of teams and broadcasting crews featured in the study. Only 16 men’s teams and 14 women’s teams – some of which appeared as many as four times – were available for analysis. Similarly, only four broadcasting crews appeared for each sex. In addition, because each crew was assigned to one of four regions in the bracket, each crew announced games featuring the same teams. If a commentator pegged a particular player as fast, strong, or capable of making sound basketball decisions, he or she was likely to repeat those same impressions throughout the tournament. Studying games from the regular season would have allowed for more diversity among both players and broadcasting crews, and it may have provided a more encompassing view of the current state of affairs concerning racial stereotyping among college basketball broadcasters.
Another potential limitation could have been – but was not – the exclusion of non-starting players when calculating the race breakdown of players within the study. As mentioned previously, a total of 150 starting players were featured in games from the men’s tournament; 117 (78 percent) were black, 27 (18 percent) were white, four were Hispanic (3 percent), and two were “other” (1 percent). If the races of non-starting players were included, a total of 314 men’s players would have appeared in this study; 205 (65 percent) African Americans, 95 (30 percent) whites, 11 (4 percent) Hispanics, and three (less than 1 percent) “others.” The percentage of blacks would have decreased, then, from 78 percent to 65 percent, while the percentage of whites would have increased from 18 percent to 30 percent. These percentages would have narrowed the gap between the number of blacks and whites in the study, and along with it, the expected gap between positive and negative comments for each variable. Thus, including non-starting players would have only strengthened the significance of the findings – rather than weakening them.

The same can be said for the women’s game. As stated earlier, a total of 130 starting players were featured in games from the women’s tournament; 105 (81 percent) were black, 22 (17 percent) were white, one was Hispanic (less than 1 percent), and 2 were “other” (1.5 percent). If the races of non-starting players were included, a total of 230 women’s players would have appeared in the study; 167 (73 percent) blacks, 59 (26 percent) whites, one (less than 1 percent) Hispanic, and three (1 percent) “others.” The percentage of blacks, then, would have decreased from 81 percent to 73 percent, while the percentage of whites would have increased from 18 percent to 26 percent. Although these changes would have been less influential than those in the men’s games, the fact
remains that the inclusion of non-starting players in the study would have bolstered the results for both sexes.

Suggestions for Future Research

Research has indicated that a racial bias exists among college basketball broadcasters; this study proved to be no exception. But what about racial stereotyping at other levels of basketball or in different sports altogether? One could compare racial stereotyping in college basketball with that in the NBA and WNBA. Researchers could also study racial stereotyping in other sports such as baseball and football. It would also be interesting to look at games that feature an equal number of black and white announcers in order to determine if one race is more likely than the other to make stereotypical comments. In addition, one could include within the study comments that are made not only about individual players, but also about teams as a whole. It would be interesting to see if team comments such as those that appeared in the women’s title game in this study are commonplace.

Another option would be to conduct similar studies in other forms of media. While the unscripted and spontaneous nature of broadcasting creates an environment prime for stereotyping, that does not mean that stereotyping cannot – or does not – occur elsewhere. One could study instances of racial stereotyping in print media such as Sports Illustrated, as well as other magazines or sports pages from around the country.

Yet another potential research avenue to explore is the process by which commentators gather and disseminate information regarding the personal lives of players. Because these facts are collected before games and have no bearing on events that unfold
on the court, it would be interesting to investigate the selection process that
commentators employ for not only the inclusion of stories, but also the wording of those
stories. Researchers could determine what role – if any – the athlete’s race plays in this
procedure. Another line of research might investigate the training that broadcasters
complete before appearing on air. This study could ascertain if – and how –
commentators are instructed to discuss players of different races.

Any research that delves deeper into this issue is a worthy endeavor. It is unlikely
that racism and stereotyping will ever be fully eradicated from society, but individuals
have the power to alter the ways in which they perceive people both on – and off – the
court. Granted, eliminating racism in college basketball broadcasting would not
eliminate racism in society or even in sports. It is, however, a start.
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## Appendix A: Coding Sheet

1. **Case Number**
   
2. **Round**
   - 1 = Sweet 16
   - 2 = Elite Eight
   - 3 = Final Four
   - 4 = Championship

3. **Date (YYYY-MM-DD)**
   
4. **Teams**
   - 1 = Winner
   - 2 = Loser

5. **Commentator**
   - 1 = Play-by-Play
   - 2 = Color Commentary
   - 3 = Sideline Reporter

6. **Commentator’s Race and Gender**
   - 1 = White Male
   - 2 = White Female
   - 3 = Black Male
   - 4 = Black Female
   - 5 = Other

7. **Player’s Race**
   - 1 = White
   - 2 = Black
   - 3 = Asian
   - 4 = Hispanic
   - 5 = Other

8. **Physical Attribute**
   - 1 = Height (yes/no)
   - 2 = Weight (yes/no)
   - 3 = Toughness (yes/no)
   - 4 = Other

9. **Physical Ability**
   - 1 = Vertical Leap (yes/no)
   - 2 = Strength (yes/no)
   - 3 = Speed (yes/no)
   - 4 = Hustle (yes/no)
   - 5 = Hard work (yes/no)
   - 6 = Other

10. **On-Court Intellect**
    - 0 = Not mentioned
    - 1 = Mentioned

11. **Off-Court Intellect**
    - 0 = Not mentioned
    - 1 = School
    - 2 = Character
    - 3 = Personal Interest Story
    - 4 = Other

12. **Positive/Negative**
    - 1 = Positive
    - 2 = Negative
    - 3 = Positive/Negative Mix

13. **Comment:**

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Appendix B: Examples of Coded Comments

Physical Attribute

Not Coded

“Player X is 6’8,” 260.
“The 6’5’’ guard is from Chicago.”

Coded

“At 6-8, 260, Player X is an absolute load down low.”
“At 5-10,” Player X is too short to get his shot off around the basket.”
“He has such great length, and he used it there to block that shot.”

Physical Ability

Coded

“Player X can really get up there; he has a 41-inch vertical leap.”
“Player X showed his strength on that move.”
“Player X needs to hit the weight room.”
“Player X showed his quickness right there; the speedy guard just blew right past his defender.”
“Player X doesn’t have the speed to keep up with him.”
“Player X is such a great athlete.”
“Player X can really light it up from outside.”

On-Court Intellect

Not Coded

“That was a nice pass”
“That was a good rebound in traffic.”
“Player X stole the ball.”

Coded

“Player X made a great decision; he saw that they didn’t have the numbers, so he dribbled back out to set up a play.”
“Player X recognized that he was being guarded by a smaller player, so he posted up and shot over his opponent.”
“Player X knew exactly what he was doing there; he saw the big man come over to guard him on the pick and roll, so he drove to the basket and drew the foul.”
“Player X drove to the basket, waited for the help defense to come and then found the open man underneath the basket.”
“Player X has great vision, and he showed it there.”
“Player X is such a smart player and is always making good decisions.”
“Player X usually makes good decisions, but that time he tried to throw the ball through the defense and it got picked off.”
“That was great anticipation on the steal.”
“That was not a smart shot right there; he didn’t have to force it.”

**Off-Court Conduct**

*Not Coded*

“Player X was a former Mr. Basketball in the state of Illinois.”
“Player X played in AAU leagues growing up.”

*Coded*

“Player X is graduating on time with a degree in political science.”
“Player X has a 4.0 GPA.”
“Player X was suspended for two games for violating the team’s drug policy.”
“Player X was suspended for tonight’s game for an unexcused absence at practice last week.”
“Player X understands the importance of family; he goes ice fishing every month with his father.”
“Player X gave up his scholarship so his team could sign another player.”