

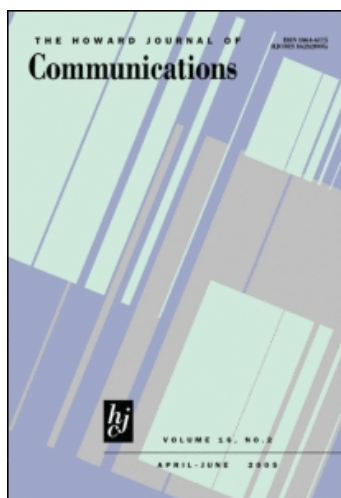
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Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Howard Journal of Communications

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713771688>

### Roughing the Passer: The Framing of Black and White Quarterbacks Prior to the NFL Draft

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Online publication date: 26 January 2010

**To cite this Article** Mercurio, Eugenio and Filak, Vincent F. (2010) 'Roughing the Passer: The Framing of Black and White Quarterbacks Prior to the NFL Draft', Howard Journal of Communications, 21: 1, 56 – 71

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/10646170903501328

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10646170903501328>

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## **Roughing the Passer: The Framing of Black and White Quarterbacks Prior to the NFL Draft**

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*This study used social learning theory and a framing perspective to examine the ways in which Black and White college quarterbacks were described by a major sports publication prior to the National Football League draft. An examination of 4,745 attributions used to describe Black and White National Football League quarterback prospects over a 10-year period revealed data patterns that emphasized racial stereotypes. Black quarterbacks were primarily described with words and phrases that emphasized their physical gifts and their lack of mental prowess. Conversely, White quarterbacks were described as less physically gifted, but more mentally prepared for the game and less likely to make mental errors. Implications for journalism, sports and scholars are discussed.*

**KEYTERMS** *athletes, football, framing, quarterbacks, race, stereotypes*

On July 14, 2003, conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh was hired by the cable sports network ESPN to become a televised commentator on its National Football League (NFL) pre-game show, *Sunday Countdown* (ESPN, 2003b). Three weeks after his debut on the network, Limbaugh was in the midst of a major controversy when he stated that Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb is favored by the media because he

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is Black (Niven, 2005). Limbaugh's words were widely criticized by the media, but instead of issuing an apology for his statement, Limbaugh stated on his radio show that the controversy showed "I must have been right about something" (Niven, 2005, p. 685). Despite this stance, Limbaugh resigned shortly thereafter, stating that his comments "were not racially motivated" (ESPN, 2003a).

Stereotypes based on race have been present in sports for decades. In the case of making clear demarcations between how Whites and Blacks play the game, the stereotype most often attached to race is one of talent versus intelligence. Writers, coaches, and social critics have openly or subversively stated that Black athletes rely on athletic abilities whereas White athletes rely on intelligence (Bruce, 2004; Buffington, 2005; Eastman & Billings, 2001; Rainville & McCormick, 1977). In the sport of football, this leads to the perception that Black athletes are not equipped to play the "smart" positions, particularly quarterback. What occurs as a result is what is known as "stacking," which Coakley (1998) defined as "players from a certain racial or ethnic group being either over- or under-represented at certain positions in team sports" (p. 257). For example, each of the 32 NFL franchises is allowed to carry a maximum of three quarterbacks on its roster, meaning a total of 96 quarterbacks could be in the league during any point in a given season. As of January 2007, only 18 of those 96 were Black (Vance, 2007). This proportion is alarmingly small, especially considering that almost 70% of the players in the league are Black (Zirin, 2007).

The media play a key role in the way public opinion is established (Hoffman, 1991) and thus can also perpetuate stereotypes of certain races (Smith & Hattery, 2006). Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997) posits individuals learn primarily through imitation and modeling behavior that is viewed as successful. In terms of sports reporting, the writing and speaking patterns of current sports journalists set the standards for the next wave of journalists, meaning any negative aspects that one generation uses to describe athletes "unconsciously teach prejudice to the next generation as part of the culture of sport" (Eastman & Billings, 2001, p. 188). Furthermore, media consumers now have unprecedented access to information thanks to a growing array of information outlets (Rein, Kotler, & Shields, 2007), making the messages within that wealth of information extremely important.

This study will examine the attributions sports journalists used over a 10-year period to describe the skills, or lack thereof, of both Black and White college quarterbacks, using social learning theory as an underlying theoretical framework. The results of such a study could reveal that the writing patterns of these journalists are filled with stereotypes of both races and are consistently used throughout the timeframe. If this is the case, this could lead to a continual pattern of social learning for both the public that consumes the media and for the sports journalists who continue to perpetuate the stereotypes of these athletes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of literature first examines the concept of social learning theory and its interplay with the concept of media frames. That is followed by an examination of the stereotypes that still exist in both sports and the media. Lastly, coverage of the NFL and its annual draft are examined to discuss the media's role in the stereotypes associated with both Black and White quarterbacks.

### Social Learning Theory

In its simplest form, social learning theory posits that knowledge is gained through observing new behavior from individuals or groups that serve as role models. Bandura (1977) explained that individuals seek out similar others to imitate in order to form socially acceptable and successfully reinforced methods of behavior. When an individual's behavior is either positively reinforced or simply allowed to go unchecked, it becomes the standard way of doing things for that individual (Bandura & Walters, 1963). To that end, the individual is not only likely to continue to behave in this fashion, they are likely to view it as correct and thus serve as an exemplar for others who seek to emulate that form of behavior.

Certain exemplar/imitator pairings are more successful in delivering socially learned behavior than others. In reviewing Bandura's key tenets, Grusec (1992) noted that the power and attractiveness of the model are often key elements associated with an individual's decision to emulate an exemplar. In addition, she argued sufficient motivation must be present in order for the individual to actively adopt the modeled actions. In other words, social learning primarily occurs when an individual perceives a tangible benefit to mimicking a behavior.

Bandura (1977) also noted that behavior garnered through social learning is more likely to retain permanence than it is to shift based on the random nature of a situation. Social learning theory has been applied successfully to numerous media issues including the assessment community support for press rights (Cullier, 2008), the impact of media messaging that encourages healthy eating (Carter et al., 2005), and the shaping of gender roles (Hyde & Jaffee, 2000) to name a few. These and other similar studies examine how social learning occurs for media consumers in the public at large but they fail to assess if social learning is occurring within the media outlets themselves.

Breed's (1955) study of social control within a newsroom is a luminous exception. His work in examining how newsrooms shaped reporters' behavior revealed much of what would become the core of Bandura's work. Breed sought to understand to what degree rules, regulation, and social mores were responsible for the attitudes and behaviors of newsroom personnel.

Reporters who participated in Breed's study explained they never received a rulebook on how to write or what to write, but instead just "picked it up" as they went along. Older reporters policed younger ones, offering advice and guidance as to how to be a good reporter.

Often the concept of being "good" came from social modeling or positive reinforcement. Reporters who engaged in proper modeling saw their stories on the front page of the paper or saw the stories appear with little editing. Reporters who had failed to adopt the newsroom's preferred standards of language and sourcing had their work returned to them covered with blue-pen edits.

In an interview with Reese and Ballinger (2001), Breed (1955) recalled how he not only learned socially, but had engaged in the process as a model as well:

I was assigned to cover "I am an American Day." An older reporter tipped me off to lead with "Bands playing and flags flying." The next year, I advised a younger reporter and her story began, "With bands playing and flags flying...". (p. 649)

Gieber (1960) noted a similar self-policing among the reporters he studied in regard to the coverage of minority issues. A reporter in the study revealed he had made several overtures to his editor regarding stories pertaining to the treatment of minorities or the living conditions in parts of town that were primarily populated by Blacks. After being rebuffed multiple times by his editor who refused to cover a "nigger story," the reporter gave up on covering incidents that involved minorities. Reporters who persisted in covering areas that were viewed as minority-centric noted greater success in receiving approval when they framed the stories less as being about minorities and more about other traditional topics, such as crime.

## Framing

Goffman (1974) first introduced the concept of social framing as the ability for a specific focus to "provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being a human being" (p. 22). Gitlin (1980) suggested that frames allow journalists to make sense of large amounts of information quickly prior to sending the material out to their audience. This framing process is not an accidental occurrence, but rather a purposive process that allows journalists to help emphasize what they believe to be newsworthy or important (Kendall, 2005). Cappella and Jamieson (1997) noted that media framing can be created through things as simple as the way in which stories are presented or the specific word choices the authors make.

Iyengar (1991) explained that these choices have the ability to alter the outcomes of how individuals will view material. Because individuals who are engaged with media are not experiencing the event first hand, the mediation created through framing can influence the audience's perceptions of reality (Kendall, 2005). In addition, some framing effects occur when "frames that cast the same critical information in either a *positive* or a *negative* light cause individuals to have different preferences" (Druckman, 2001, p. 228, emphasis in original).

A strong example of the effect that framing can have in the sports media was shown in a study done by Messner and Solomon (1993). On March 30, 1991, the *Los Angeles Times* broke a story that boxer "Sugar" Ray Leonard had admitted to "physically abusing his wife, including hitting her with his fists, and to using cocaine and alcohol over a three-year period while temporarily retiring from boxing" (Messner & Solomon, 1993, p. 119). The researchers analyzed the content of stories written in three papers about the incident to examine how the story was framed, either as a "drug story," a "domestic violence story," or both. The study showed that the beginning phases of the story made drug abuse more salient and the wife abuse secondary, and as coverage continued the wife abuse story was eliminated altogether. This study was significant because it showed how the media can frame a story to make one aspect more salient, while ignoring another aspect of the story, which ultimately, was just as significant.

### Racial Stereotypes of Athletes

There has been the long and widespread assumption that as a whole, Blacks are athletes by "temperament and genetic endowment" (Hoberman, 2000, p. 50). It is also a widespread notion that "Black individuals of African ancestry are inherently superior in physical ability" (Rasmussen, Esgate, & Turner, 2005, p. 427).

Researchers have often sought to assess whether even basic ascriptions of race would lead to stereotyping of athletes. Johnson, Hallinan, and Westerfield (1999) found that study participants who viewed four photographs of "successful college basketball players" overwhelmingly ascribed the Black athlete's success to innate abilities and distinct biological advantages. The success of the White athletes was ascribed to hard work and socioeconomic factors. The researchers concluded that "if certain population groups are expected to excel in a sport because they are stereotyped as possessing inherited physical characteristics, patterns of discrimination could be perpetuated" (p. 52).

Rasmussen et al. (2005) conducted a similar study to determine whether novice sprinting coaches would stereotype Black and White runners. Participants were presented with four White stereotypical and four Black stereotypical statements concerned with success in sports, along with headshot

photographs of Black and White individuals posing as athletes. The coaches were then asked to rate the extent to which they believed that each factor contributed to the athlete's success. The study showed that these novice coaches attributed the success of the athletes to the stereotypes associated with each race. The researchers concluded that this finding was especially alarming because the photographs used were of people who were not involved in athletics and the people were only shown from the shoulders up.

The stereotype of Black athletes as being naturally gifted has led to non-Black athletes being viewed as the opposite; they have to use their mental abilities to establish themselves in sport. Stone, Sjomeling, Lynch, and Darling (1999) ran experiments to see if Black and White individuals themselves would believe these stereotypes, thus altering their performances at various tasks. Participants in the study were told one experiment would test their intellectual ability and the other would test their athletic ability. The study found that when the individuals were told they were being tested for natural abilities, Blacks did far better than Whites, whereas the opposite occurred when they were told they were being tested on intelligence. The test demonstrated that individuals believed in both the positive and negative stereotypes that have been attributed to their race over the course of time when those beliefs are made salient.

Media studies that examined the pairing of race and stereotypes have also yielded disturbing results. In one of the earliest studies of television announcers' speech, Rainville and McCormick (1977) studied commentators for professional football games by pairing White athletes and Black athletes who played the same positions and then examining how each player was described. They found that the announcers more frequently offered positive commentary on White athletes while denigrating Black athletes by comparing them unfavorably to other athletes.

Eastman and Billings (2001) found that stereotypes of Black athletes were perpetuated by broadcasts of college basketball games. In an analysis of 1,156 announcer comments from 66 men's and women's college basketball games, Black players were described as athletic, physically powerful, and possessing great jumping abilities, but lacking intelligence. White players, in contrast, were described as being good shooters, leaders and smart players, but lacking athleticism (Eastman & Billings, 2001).

Taking their work a step further, those same researchers conducted two studies involving stereotypes and sportscasters of the Olympics. Billings and Eastman (2003) conducted an analysis of descriptions of ethnicity during telecasts of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. They found that NBC sportscasters were more likely to attribute the success of Black athletes to athletic skill, whereas White athletes were portrayed as successful due to superior commitment. They also found that six of the top 10 most mentioned athletes in the Sydney Games were White and that significantly more comments were made about the modest nature of White athletes as opposed to athletes of other ethnic groups.

## Racial Stereotypes of NFL Quarterbacks

Over the nearly 90-year history of the NFL, Black football players rarely received the opportunity to play quarterback, which is arguably the sport's most prominent position. The stereotypes about how Blacks possessed athleticism but lacked mental abilities resulted in the virtual exclusion of Blacks at the position (Buffington, 2005). In recent years, the success of Black quarterbacks has helped diminish some of the novelty associated with the discussion of race and this position, but has not diminished the racial stereotyping in the media. For example, Murrell and Curtis (1994) compared the presentation of the performances of three White and three Black NFL quarterbacks in sports magazines and found that Black quarterbacks were presented as having natural ability or being an athlete who happened to be a quarterback. In contrast, White players were shown to be successful because of their hard work and effort.

In a study of the NFL draft, Oates and Meenakshi (2004) undertook a critical textual reading of the three most popular print publications covering the draft to analyze how writers relied on stereotyping. The researchers found that in these guides, the draft writers focused on the physical acumen of the players and when Blacks outperformed Whites in these categories, it perpetuated a "stud" image of Blacks. This image of Black athletes, based on their perceived athletic prowess and body composition, has become highly visible in American society, and is reinforced in both the media and culture in general (Smith & Hattery, 2006).

Based on this review of literature, we wanted to examine to what degree Black and White quarterbacks were being stereotyped by the media professionals who compiled information on these players prior to the NFL draft.

- H1: Media coverage of the NFL Draft will use attributes that show Black quarterback prospects as having positive physical abilities but lacking intelligence.
- H2: Media coverage of the NFL Draft will use attributes that show White quarterback prospects as having positive mental abilities but lacking athleticism.

## METHOD

To test these hypotheses, a content analysis was conducted on the written descriptions of NFL quarterback prospects featured on the "NFL Draft" section of the *Sports Illustrated* Website (SI.com) from 1998 to 2007. This site was chosen for several reasons. First, both Internet use and the popularity of online news services have grown tremendously in recent years ("Engineering News Record," 2001; Outing, 1998). Secondly, the Website is



the sports section for Online, which is “among the world’s leaders in online news and information delivery” (“About CNN.com”, 2007). Furthermore, *SI* describes itself as “the most respected voice in sports journalism” (“SI Media Kit,” 2008). The time frame was chosen because 1998 was the first year that *SI* dedicated a Web page to the draft, and its extensive coverage of the draft has continued since that time.

During the chosen timeframe, journalists on this Website examined a total of 295 quarterback prospects, with each player’s Web page including his previous year’s statistics, his physical measurements and his NFL Combine results. This annual combine is a six-day event held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in which players are put through a series of drills, tests, and interviews with more than 600 NFL personnel weeks before the draft (NFL Scouting Combine, 2008). However, not all players were given a written description by *SI*, as was the case with 61 prospects. Those players that had no descriptions were only accompanied by demographic data.

Almost all of these 61 players that did not have a description were lower-ranked prospects from the first few years within the timeframe, with 55 of those players falling between the years of 1998–2001. Most notably, there were only three players with descriptions out of 16 total quarterbacks in 2001, and no reason was given as to why this was so. However, almost all the prospects in the latter half of the timeframe (2002–2007) had descriptions, with only six very low-ranked prospects being excluded. This difference in exclusion was most likely due to the growth of Internet usage during the latter timeframe. In the end, the 61 players without descriptions were eliminated from consideration in this study.

For the 234 remaining quarterbacks that did have descriptions, the race of each player was determined using numerous techniques, including studying photos of the players, conducting Internet searches on the players and contacting the players’ former colleges. If all of these methods were unsuccessful, those players whose race could not be determined were excluded from the study. This only occurred for one player.

Of the remaining 233 quarterbacks, 170 were coded as White, 61 were coded as Black, and 2 were coded as “other,” as their race was determined to be something other than Black or White. For the purposes of this study, the two players coded as “other” were excluded from the study, leaving 231 quarterback prospects for analysis.

To test the proposed hypotheses, we examined each player description for any word or phrase that depicted athleticism and intelligence. Each attribute was coded into one of four mutually exclusive categories: positive physical (e.g., “strong arm”), positive mental (“reads defenses well”), negative physical (“not mobile”), and negative mental (“makes too many mental mistakes”). Any attributes deemed to either be neutral or ones that did not fit within the categories of athleticism or intelligence were excluded. An example of this was the word *potential*, which offered no indication if the

player was labeled as having potential based on physical abilities, mental abilities, or both. Only attributes, as opposed to statistics and demographic information, were extracted for this study.

Upon the completion of this process, a coder was used to analyze each player. To become familiar with positive and negative terms associated with both athleticism and intelligence, the coder was given initial training by conducting a pilot study using a random sample from *SI*'s player descriptions of offensive centers. This was done for several reasons. First, a sample of quarterbacks could not be used because the chosen timeframe for the study was every year that *SI* had done descriptions for college prospects, thus leaving no other years from which a sample could be chosen. Second, Woodward (2002) explained that, much like the quarterback position, offensive center is known to be a "thinking" position and many of the same abilities are needed. This would most likely indicate that many similar attributes would be used for both positions. Lastly, it was beneficial to use offensive centers because the position offers a good mix of both Black and White players.

After all of the 231 quarterbacks were completed by the coder, a 10% random check of the coder's total results was then done by the researcher to test intercoder reliability. A Cohen's Kappa revealed an intercoder reliability of 0.88, which is an acceptable statistical outcome. The coder's results were then entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program and then tested using Chi-squares.

## RESULTS

Overall, there were 4,745 attributions that were coded from the 231 total quarterback prospects who had written descriptions. The attributions given to White players totaled 3,553, while Black players were given 1,192 attributions. Black players averaged 19.86 attributions while White players averaged 20.78 attributions. In terms of the breakdown of the nature of those attributions, we found that Blacks received an average of 9.20 positive physical, 3.83 negative physical, 3.61 positive mental, and 3.21 negative mental attributes. White players received an average of 7.67 positive physical, 4.74 negative physical, 6.35 positive mental, and 2.01 negative mental attributes.

A Chi-Square test of these results showed that there was a significant difference between the descriptions of the two races ( $\chi^2 = 108.151$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). A standardized residual analysis was also done to assess where the greatest levels of disparity were between the Black and White quarterbacks. This was done because of the imbalance in data, with White quarterbacks having more than three times the number of attributes than the Black quarterbacks (see Table 1).

H1 stated media coverage of the NFL Draft will use attributes that show Black quarterback prospects as having positive physical abilities but lacking

**TABLE 1** Comparison of Total Attributions Coded for Both Races (Black and White) From 1998–2007.

Variable	Attribution categories				Total
	Positive physical	Negative physical	Positive mental	Negative mental	
Black					
Observed count	552	230	217	193	1,192
Expected count	468.3	261.5	327.3	134.9	1,192.0
Std. Residual	3.9	−1.9	−6.1	5.0	
White					
Observed count	1312	811	1086	344	3,553
Expected count	1395	779.5	975.7	402.1	3,553.0
Std. residual	−2.2	1.1	3.5	−2.9	
Total					
Observed count	1,864	1,041	1,303	537	4,745
Expected count	1,864.0	1,041.0	1,303.0	537.0	4,745.0

intelligence. Table 1 shows a cross tabulation taken between race (Black and White) and the four attribution categories: positive physical, negative physical, positive mental, and negative mental. With an attribution count of 552 and an expected count of 468.3, the positive physical attributions for Blacks had a standardized residual of 3.9. The standardized residual of the Black's positive mental attributions was −6.1 with an attribution count of 217 and expected count of 327.3, whereas the negative mental attributions was a 5.0 with an attribution count of 193 and an expected count of 134.9. These standardized residuals were the largest ones shown for Blacks and therefore contributed most greatly to the significance of the Chi-Square results. Thus, H1 was supported.

H2 stated media coverage of the NFL Draft will use attributes that show White quarterback prospects as having positive mental abilities but lacking athleticism. Using the same cross tabulation mentioned above, a standardized residual of −2.2 was shown for the positive physical attributions of Whites, while their positive mental attributions showed a standardized residual of 3.5 and their negative mental attributions had a −2.9 standardized residual. Again, these standardized residuals were the largest ones shown for Whites and therefore contributed most greatly to the significance of the Chi-Square results. Thus, H2 was supported.

Because 55 of the 61 players that did not have written descriptions fell between the years 1998 through 2001, the same aforementioned cross tabulation was done to the data from 2002 through 2007 in an effort to show that those without descriptions did not have a large effect on the total data (see Table 2). This cross tabulation showed that the same significant levels of data held true. The positive physical attributes for Blacks had an observed attribution count of 424, an expected count of 354.6 and a standardized residual of 3.7. The standardized residual of positive mental attributions for Blacks

**TABLE 2** Comparison of Total Attributions Coded for Both Races (Black and White) From 2002–2007.

Variable	Attribution categories				Total
	Positive physical	Negative physical	Positive mental	Negative mental	
Black					
Observed count	424	186	192	162	964
Expected count	354.6	206.8	286.8	115.9	964.0
Std. residual	3.7	−1.4	−5.6	4.3	
White					
Observed count	1039	667	991	316	3,013
Expected count	1108.4	646.2	896.2	362.1	3,013.0
Std. residual	−2.1	.8	3.2	−2.4	
Total					
Observed count	1,463	853	1,183	478	3,977
Expected count	1,463.0	853.0	1,183.0	478.0	3,977.0

was a  $-5.6$  with the observed count being 192 and the expected count being 286.8, while the standardized residual of their negative mental attributions was a 4.3 with an observed count of 162 and an expected count of 115.9.

At the same time, the observed attribution count of positive physical attributes for Whites was 1,039 with an expected count of 1,108.4 and showed a standardized residual of  $-2.1$ . Furthermore, the positive mental attributions for Whites had a standardized residual of 3.2 with an observed count 991 and an expected count of 896.2. Additionally, a Chi-square test of this data again showed significant differences between the descriptions of the two races ( $\chi^2 = 86.242$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

To place the data results within the context of the written descriptions, the following examples are various descriptions used for quarterback prospects who were drafted into the NFL during two years, with one prospect being White and one being Black from each year. In 1999, a highly ranked White quarterback who played for a school in the Pacific-10 Conference was described by *SI* as “not a big physical guy” and not having a “great ‘gun,’” which was used to describe his lack of arm strength.

However, that same quarterback prospect, who was drafted in the top half of the first round of that year’s draft, was also described as a “real student of the game” and “prides himself on his ability to read defenses and make smart decisions.” Furthermore, *SI* predicted that the quarterback would be “a guy on draft day that several teams will throw out the measurables (sic) and concentrate on the player.” That same year, a Black quarterback from a university located in the state of Florida was described by *SI* as “the best physical specimen in this group [of prospects]” and “if measurables (sic) make a quarterback, he is at the top of the class.” He was also described as being “a big guy with a rifle arm, good mobility, good feet, shows good overall toughness and a good feel for the game.” *SI*, though, ended its

description of this player with the following statement: “His biggest adjustment will be in the mental area, as he will face sophisticated NFL defenses, and his ability to learn a new system quickly and make the right decisions will be critical to his early NFL success.”

More recently, a White player from a university in the Mid-American Conference who was selected in the bottom half of the 2005 draft was described by *SI* as a “hard-working, intelligent signal-caller” who “makes good decisions” and “rarely forces throws.” The knocks on this player were that he “cannot zip the outs,” “under-throws deep targets,” and has an “inability to throw the long ball.” Conversely, a Black quarterback from a university in the Southeastern Conference also picked in the lower half of that same draft was described as an “athletic passer with the physical skills to play in the NFL.” *SI* wrote that he could also “drive the deep throw,” “put air under his passes,” and “pick up yardage with this legs.” His flaws, according to *SI*, included being an “indecisive” player who “stares down primary targets” and “does not find the safety,” with this last statement meaning he was not able to read the defense of the opposing team.

Both these examples showed the similarities in the descriptions of Black and White players, despite the vast difference in where they were drafted. This pattern was consistent throughout the chosen timeframe, where most Black players were depicted as athletes playing quarterback, whereas White players were generally depicted as decent athletes with high intelligence. The results of the data echo this pattern.

## DISCUSSION

The findings in this study reveal a disturbing issue in race relations as they pertain to sport. While it is often easy to see, and be appalled by, overtly racist comments in the world of sport, our work reveals a subversive and perhaps more dangerous territory in regard to race and sport. When baseball executive Al Campanis issued his declaration that Blacks lack the cognitive “necessities” to be a manager (Harris, 1998) or when basketball commentator Billy Packer called Allen Iverson a “tough monkey” (Phillips, 1996) many people rightly took umbrage. That said, our work here reveals that in less graphic but more repetitious fashion, journalists have been saying much the same thing about Black quarterbacks for years. The data show that Black quarterback prospects are overwhelmingly portrayed as being very athletic but lacking mental abilities. These stereotypes also targeted White quarterbacks as well, with results showing that they have the mental capabilities to play the position, but lack athleticism. Overall, these results clearly indicate that journalists are displaying these racial stereotypes within their writing.

Research cited above and conducted in other areas involving race has demonstrated that the word choices and emphases used by the media can

lead to specific frames by which we view these athletes. For instance, a common phrase used by *SI* to describe a Black quarterback was “an athlete playing quarterback,” whereas Whites with similar traits rarely were deemed in such a matter, but more along the lines of “athletic quarterbacks.” This description seemed to assume that Blacks were out of position because they only possessed athletic abilities, whereas a White player could be both athletic and a quarterback, since, based on the stereotype, he would have the mental abilities to handle the position as well. With a constant framing by the media that Black and White quarterbacks have certain traits, it will be extremely difficult for individuals in both of those races to be seen for anything other than those traits, even if they possess other skills.

Racial and ethnic minorities face numerous challenges in developing strong role models, primarily due to the dearth of race-specific role models in specific and important positions (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004). Furthermore, the stereotyping can lead to modeling behavior that is not accurate in regard to the overall desired outcome. Although this study addresses only one position in the field of sports that few individuals will ever attain, the presentation of these high-profile Black athletes as being intellectually inferior and yet physically gifted can lead the next generation of young Black men to see physical gifts as being predominantly important in success while eschewing the value of intellectual development.

In addition, the work here shows that these stereotypes are persistent over time, which leads to several negative outcomes. First, by constantly referring to Blacks as being talented but unintelligent, the media socially teaches the audience to look for these aspects in the ways in which the athletes play the game. Thus, when a Black quarterback like Donovan McNabb throws an interception, the audience is more likely to attribute it to his lack of intelligence (“a dumb play”). Meanwhile, if a White quarterback like Peyton Manning throws an interception, the audience will likely place the blame on the lack of a physical gift (“he just under-threw the receiver”). Implicit in all of this is that mistakes made by lack of physical gifts can be eliminated through hard work while errors made due to cognitive limits will not be as easily erased. Thus, this further perpetuates the idea that Blacks should not be in a position that requires them to rely on intellect.

Second, in examining the data longitudinally, we noted that this pattern of framing has persisted over an extended period of time. Over a 10-year period, the data did not deviate from the stereotypes and thus led us to conclude that social learning is likely present within the newsroom as well. Our previous experience in newsroom projects, as well as our discussions with other current and former journalists, tells us that if these draft summaries are like most other projects, the writers of each year’s set draft capsules was likely told to look at the previous year’s version for guidance. Much like the scenarios outlined by Warren Breed more than 50 years ago, these journalists likely learned not only to sketch out the stats on these individuals but also the

stereotypes that went along with them. As previous studies have shown, each generation teaches unto the next how best to succeed. The writing style, word choices and other general framing aspects that come from the draft capsules were likely the result of social learning. To that end, it is likely that this self-perpetuating loop will continue unaddressed without a greater sense of understanding as to the deleterious consequences of these stereotypes.

The nature of social learning is that it leads to a standardization of understanding among a broader pool of individuals in regard to a phenomenon in nature. Although overt racism is often dealt with and discouraged, the issues of how individuals and social groups are portrayed in a more aversive format still needs to be addressed. We would like to continue to examine this in future research by examining to what degree this type of consistent treatment of Black and White quarterbacks affects the view of fans. We would also like to perhaps revisit Breed's work as it pertains to social learning and racial stereotyping within the world of sports media. Given the volume of people who consume sports media (*SI* boasts 21 million readers/viewers per week alone) the media can have a massive influence over how these athletes are perceived ([www.simediakit.com](http://www.simediakit.com) digital). If social learning at the newsroom level is perpetuating stereotypes, a study to assess the root causes of this as well as seeking possible amelioration would have significant value.

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