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Foul Ball: Audience-Held Stereotypes of Baseball Players

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Foul Ball: Audience-Held Stereotypes of Baseball Players

Abstract

This study experimentally tested whether participants held and/or applied stereotypes of baseball players. Participants were asked to rate white, black, and Latino baseball players based on stereotypes consistently identified in previous literature.

Participants saw a photo of a player and an anonymous paragraph from a newspaper that highlighted a particular stereotype. They were then asked to rate the author's credibility. Black players were rated as higher in physical strength and natural ability, consistent with previous literature concerning how athletes were described. However, white and Latin players were not stereotyped. But participants rated white-consistent descriptions as credible and Latin-consistent descriptions as less credible. These results are interpreted through the prism of social identity theory.

Disciplines

African American Studies | Communication | Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication | Latina/o Studies | Social Influence and Political Communication | Sports Studies

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Foul Ball: Audience-held stereotypes of baseball players

ABSTRACT:

This study experimentally tested whether participants held and/or applied stereotypes of baseball players. Participants were asked to rate White, Black and Latino baseball players based on stereotypes consistently identified in previous literature. Participants saw a photo of a player and an anonymous paragraph from a newspaper that highlighted a particular stereotype. They were then asked to rate the author's credibility. Black players were rated as higher in physical strength and natural ability, consistent with previous literature concerning how athletes were described. However, White and Latin players were not stereotyped. But, participants rated White-consistent descriptions as credible and Latin-consistent descriptions as less credible. These results are interpreted through the prism of social identity theory.

KEYWORDS:

STEREOTYPES

BASEBALL

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

SPORTS COMMUNICATION

EXPERIMENT

INTRODUCTION

An age-old trope is that once an athlete enters the field of play, only skill and not race, gender, or any other factor matters. However, the sports media certainly do not act accordingly. Numerous studies of the coverage of athletes show that journalists and broadcasters describe players of different races and genders differently (e.g., Billings, 2004; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Birrell, 2003; Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). These scholars found ample evidence suggesting biases in coverage of athletes. Depending on the race of a player, for example, a journalist or broadcaster likely will use stereotypical descriptors in coverage. This practice first received notice in the late 1800s when both academics and athlete themselves began noticing how the media portrayed Black and White athletes very differently (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999). For a long time, athletes, coaches, biologists, academics, and members of the media all disseminated the belief that athletes of different races inherently boasted distinctive skill sets (Wiggins, 1989). While there may be less overt racism and institutionalized racism in the United States now than there was decades ago, stereotypes concerning different races form the basis of a different, more covert type of racism still prevalent in today's society (Essed, 1991). Recent studies confirm that people still debate whether Black athletes exhibit superior athleticism based on race alone (e.g., Ferrucci, Tandoc, Painter, & Leshner, 2013; George, 1992; Stone, Perry, & Darley, 1997). Researchers conducted a series of content analyses exploring the fundamental differences in how the media stereotype athletes depending on race (e.g., Angelini & Billings, 2010; Astroff, 1988; Wonsek, 1992). In these studies, researchers show that journalists and broadcasters continue describing athletes of differing races using stereotypes. These descriptors remain

consistent across sports and gender. A journalist is far more likely to describe a White athlete, for example, as intelligent or hard working than he or she would a Black athlete. The Black athlete is much more likely to be labeled as physically strong or holding more natural ability. Numerous researchers have examined and identified the stereotypical descriptors used in sports journalism, but few have tested whether consumers of media content hold these stereotypes (Van Sterkenburg, Knoppers, & De Leeuw, 2010).

This study builds on previous literature to test experimentally whether participants apply stereotypes to White, Black, and Latino baseball players. Previous researchers tested whether the audience holds and applies stereotypes to White and Black baseball players. These studies, however, do not acknowledge the amount of Latino players in baseball. During the 2013 Major League Baseball season, White players accounted for 61.2% of all Major League players, while Latino players accounted for 28.2% and Black players only 8.3% (Lapchick, 2013b). The rise of Latino players began in the 1960s and continues today (Regalado, 1998). Because the sports media also stereotype Latino players (Bjarkman, 1994), it is important to also test whether audiences hold these stereotypes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Devine (1989) wrote that stereotypical depictions can lead to prejudice. And Eastman and Billings (2001) concluded that the media focus on certain characteristics and eschew others when discussing athletes; they found that these descriptions are often based on race. Researchers have shown that athletes of specific races receive similar descriptions. Consumers of sports broadcasts or sports journalists may not notice that a White athlete rarely gets called naturally gifted. In a vacuum, people could consider this

observation as merely interesting and far from destructive. However, as argued by Essed (1991), the effects of these subtle stereotypes depicting a form of subtle, everyday racism can prove just as influential, if not more so, than overtly racist stereotypes.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory, fundamentally, encompasses three things: that people desire to see themselves positively and have others view them approvingly (Tajfel, 1982), and that people being part of a group with members who hold similar values and beliefs is imperative to their sense of identity (Turner, 1982). A person's conception of himself or herself "derives from membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 63). Through differentiating between members of their group and nonmembers, individuals maintain a sense of superiority that reinforces their self-esteem (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

This practice of differentiating between groups forms the basis of in-group, out-group bias. When people see themselves as part of a group, they become very aware of the differences between the group they belong to (the in-group) and everyone that is not part of it (the out-group) (Gardikiotis, 2008). Linville and Fischer (1993) found that people stereotype based on in-group and out-group bias. These groups can be formed based on race, gender, class, or almost any characteristic that a person believes he or she holds. An individual believes that everyone in his or her in-group is unique but tends to think of people in the out-group as homogenous and having the same characteristics (Brewer, 1979, 1986). Bresnahan and Lee (2011) argued that social identity theory, and specifically in-groups and out-groups, is an appropriate and effective framework to study

racial stereotypes. In the context of the present study, in-group and out-group biases would arise, for example, if White participants do not apply stereotypes to White players, but only to Black and Latin players.

Race and Sports

Much of the research examining stereotypes and sports feature only Black and White athletes. However, the American-based leagues for baseball, football, basketball and hockey increasingly have become worldwide games, with athletes from areas around the globe coming to the United States to participate in what are widely believed to be the most competitive leagues in the world (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006). Rowe (2007) argued that the way the sports media describe the athletes participating in these global sports strongly influences how people perceive athletes of different races.

Researchers examining how White and Black athletes receive different descriptions have found similar results across all sports studied. White and Black athletes tend to be described using a brains-versus-brawn dichotomy (e.g., Billings, 2003, 2004; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Denham, Billings, & Halone, 2002; Eastman & Billings, 2001; Halone & Billings, 2010; Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005; Rainville, 1978). In these studies, scholars examined coverage of basketball, baseball, football, golf, and various Olympic sports. All found that White athletes, regardless of sport, tended to be described as intelligent and leaders while the media tend to describe Black athletes as physically strong and having natural ability. Researchers argued that while it may seem complimentary to describe White athletes as leaders or Black athletes as strong, bias reveals itself when we look at media descriptions through the prism of race (Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005). The media tend to describe White athletes in controllable ways and

Black athletes in non-controllable manners, hence the nature-versus-nurture description. For example, a White athlete works at gaining more intelligence pertaining to his or her sport, must try to be a better leader, or has to work harder. However, a Black athlete is born stronger or with more natural ability.

Rainville (1978) first studied these stereotypical depictions, testing whether audiences could detect the biases. He provided participants with anonymous transcripts of NFL game broadcasts and asked them to guess which athletes depicted were White and which were Black. He found that more than half of the participants guessed correctly. Wiggins (1997) studied the history of how Black athletes have been covered and described. He also looked at how White and Black athletes performed. He found that although there was little or no evidence to suggest that White and Black players performed differently, the media still published information to the contrary. These findings are quite similar to the vast amount of research studying Black and White quarterbacks in the NFL. Billings (2004) found when Black quarterbacks succeeded, broadcasters attributed it to athletic skill, while the failures of White quarterbacks were attributed to a lack of athletic skill.

Far fewer scholars examine stereotypes in coverage of Latino athletes. This lack of scholarship probably is due to a scarcity of Latino players in the four major sports besides baseball (Astroff, 1988). However, researchers suggest that the sports media do use certain descriptors when discussing Latino baseball players. Osmer (2011), in a study that primarily examined Latino player assimilation to minor league baseball cities in the South, found that Latin players typically were described as fiery and flashy. This description is consistent with Regalado's (1994) findings in his study of how the sports

media portray Latino baseball players. Among other stereotypes, Regalado found that the media labeled these players as fiery and flashy, among other stereotypes. Consistent with stereotypes found concerning White and Black athletes, Regalado (1994) cautioned that neither fiery or flashy are necessarily negative stereotypes. Fiery usually signifies that the athlete cares about winning deeply, and flashy, for a baseball player, usually means he makes plays with a certain flair. Regalado (1998) followed up this study with a much closer look at Latino baseball players. This book-length study confirmed the prior results and posited that these stereotypes hinder Latino players' quest for appropriate recognition and negatively affect their ability to obtain off-the-field endorsement opportunities. Finally, Bjarkman (1994) noted the existence of the same fiery and flashy stereotypes in coverage of Latino baseball players. In the eyes of the sports media, White players are intelligent and leaders, Black players hold natural ability and are strong, and Latino players are fiery and flashy. These stereotypes appear across sports. However, of all the major American sports, baseball features the most equitable racial representation among White, Black and Latino players (Regalado, 1998), which makes it the perfect sport to use for an experiment testing whether participants apply stereotypes based on race.

Stereotyping

The Devine (1989) model of stereotyping priming features two distinct processes. She found that there is a difference between personal beliefs and cultural stereotypes. The two-part process features two stages: activation and application. Therefore, Devine argued, racial stereotyping is both a controlled and automatic process. The activation stage occurs in everyone and is automatic. The basic argument is that when a person is presented with a member of a stereotyped group, the person automatically will activate

his or her stereotypes. If a person is aware that, for example, Asians tend to be stereotyped as smart, then whenever they see an Asian, a smart stereotype will be activated. However, a person might not hold a stereotype just because he or she understands what cultural stereotypes exist. This gap is examined in the application stage. Returning to the prior example, a person is presented with the image of an Asian person, the smart stereotype is activated automatically, but the person then controls whether he or she applies that stereotype. In the context of an experiment on stereotypes of baseball players, a participant could be shown a photo of Black player, understand that stereotypes about Black players as physically strong exist, but then choose whether to apply that stereotype. Devine argued that even if, say, a White person holds no racist beliefs, he or she still has knowledge about stereotypes concerning people of all races. Bodenhausen, Macrae, and Sherman (1999) posited that while stereotypes are automatically activated, people differ in their motivation and ability to apply stereotypes.

Numerous researchers empirically tested this model of stereotyping priming (e.g., Brown Givens & Monahan, 2005; Dijksterhuis & Van Knippenberg, 1996; Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Spencer, Fein, Wolfe, Fong, & Duinn, 1998; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997). In each of these studies, researchers examined either the activation or application stage of stereotyping, or both. In an experiment, the manner to study the activation stage relies on timed response because only implicit measures suffice when attempting to measure an automatic process. However, to examine the application stage, explicit measures work. In the present study, the researchers only look at the application stage: The experimenters attempt to learn whether participants will apply common stereotypes pertaining to White, Black and Latino baseball players.

Priming

Priming theory posits that when presented with new information, a person will use the most easily retrievable material in his or her cognitive networks to make sense of this new information (Abraham & Appiah, 2006). For the purposes of the current experiment, priming states that when a participant is exposed to media messages concerning someone of a particular race, in the context of sport, they will rely on easily accessible information to process these media messages (Dalisay & Tan, 2009).

Numerous studies have tested Devine's model utilizing priming theory. Dovidio et al. (1997) argued that the only way to truly test the application stage of stereotyping is to prime the participant with an image of someone of which they could possibly apply stereotypes. In their experiment, participants were shown photos of Black and White people and then asked to apply certain stereotypes. Leshner (2006) examined whether participants would stereotype people after viewing television news stories. In this study, similar to others that used priming to study stereotypes, participants saw images of criminals before being asked questions pertaining to stereotypes. For the current study, participants will be primed with a photo of a Black, White or Latino player to test whether they apply particular stereotypes based on the player's race. Thus, we test the following hypotheses:

H1. Black athletes would be rated the highest in a) physical strength and b) natural ability.

H2. White athletes would be rated highest in a) leadership and b) intelligence.

H3. Latino athletes would be rated highest in being a) flashy and b) fiery.

Media Credibility

People tend not to associate as much with members of an out-group and therefore do not actually know many of these groups, so the media inevitably become the main disseminator of stereotypes (e.g., Billings, 2004; Harris, 1994, Lippmann, 1922). Thus, when a media source disseminates a message inconsistent with a stereotype an audience member holds, will the audience member negatively rate the message's credibility? Previous researchers have shown that the relatively recent rebirth of partisan news sources, such as Fox News or MSNBC, allow people to consume only messages aligned with their own beliefs (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). Indeed, Meyer (2002) found that people rate messages in line with their personal beliefs as more credible. Scholars have explicated media credibility as a function of three dimensions: source, medium, and message (e.g., Hu & Sundar, 2010; Kioussis, 2001). Gunther (1992) measured source credibility and found that a person's own group identification influenced most heavily whether a participant rated a source as credible or not. We therefore ask:

RQ1. How does stereotype consistency, or describing players based on stereotypes, affect source credibility?

RQ2. Is there an interaction between race of player and stereotype consistency in terms of source credibility?

Baseball Stereotypes and the Audience

Ferrucci et al. (2013) measured the application stage of stereotyping White and Black players to determine if participants held racial stereotypes concerning baseball players. For Black players, the stereotypes physically strong and natural ability were tested. For White players, the stereotypes intelligence and leadership were tested. The researchers found that participants stereotyped Black players but not White players. This inconsistent stereotyping could be explained, the researchers argued, by the

predominantly White sample of participants and in-group, out-group biases. The study provides empirical evidence that the stereotypical depictions that content analyses of sports coverage had found were also deeply ingrained among participants. There is reason to believe that sports media use might play a part, so that those who follow sports more closely tend to hold these stereotypes of athletes, but the study did not find evidence to support this (Ferrucci et. al, 2013).

Only the application stage of stereotyping will be examined in this study. However, unlike those prior studies, stereotypes concerning Latino players also will be examined. Including Latino players is important because of the racial makeup of baseball: There are more than three times as many Latino players in Major League Baseball as there are Black players. The researchers will use the previously tested White stereotypes (intelligence, leadership) and Black stereotypes (natural ability, physically strong) and, based on the literature pertaining to Latino stereotypes, also will test the two most prevalent Latin stereotypes (flashy, fiery).

METHOD

This study is a 3 (race of athlete: Black, White, or Latino) x 2 (stereotype: consistent or inconsistent) x 3 (message repetition) mixed experimental design, where race is a between-subjects factor while stereotype consistency and message repetition are within-subjects factors.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from a pool of undergraduate students at a large Midwestern university and a medium-sized Southwestern university. These lower-division mass communication students took part in the study in exchange for course

credit. We removed all incomplete responses and were left with 427 participants split between the three race conditions ($n_1 = 161$, $n_2 = 137$, $n_3 = 129$). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions based on the month they were born. They were directed to the corresponding URL for the assigned condition. In the experiment, they saw three photos (of players of the same race), rated each by answering a series of questions, read a short description for each photo (one stereotype consistent and two stereotype inconsistent), and then rated the credibility of the writer of each description. Finally, participants answered a series of demographic questions before being debriefed.

Stimulus Materials

The photographs of athletes used in the study were gathered from a collection of photos of minor league baseball players. Minor league baseball players were used in order to reduce the chance that a participant would recognize any of the athletes. Photographs of actual players were used in order to strengthen the study's internal validity. Out of a group of 50 identically shot photos of players from the same team, we conducted a pretest to test that participants could identify the race of the player depicted. Pretest participants saw all 50 photographs and were asked to write in the athlete's race. Only photos that were unanimously identified as White, Black and Latino were used in the experiment. The researchers used 9 photos equally divided into the three conditions (3 Blacks, 3 Whites, and 3 Latinos). All 9 photos were also pretested to ensure that participants would not find the players significantly different in attractiveness, and did not recognize any photo.

The pretested descriptive texts that followed each of the photos were adapted from real sports articles. They were edited to include either a consistent or inconsistent stereotype in order fit each condition.

Dependent Variables

Descriptors. The participants rated each player on a 5-point scale, with 5 being high and 1 being low on the trait, based on six descriptors the researchers adopted from the literature on stereotypes of athletes. These are physical strength, natural ability, leadership, intelligence, flashiness, and fieriness. The literature indicates that Black players often are stereotyped as high in physical strength and natural ability; White players are stereotyped as high in leadership and intelligence; while Latino players are stereotyped as flashy and fiery on the field.

Source Credibility. The participants rated the writer of each descriptor based on five items using a Likert scale (5 as strongly agree; 1 as strongly disagree). The five items described the writer as can be trusted, accurate, unfair (reversed), tells the whole story and biased (reversed). These items were adapted from previous studies on media credibility (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Hu & Sundar, 2010; Meyer, 1988) and were used by the study the researchers are replicating (Ferrucci, et al., 2013). The Cronbach's alpha across all conditions was 0.71, consistent with the previous studies that used this scale.

Independent Variables

Race of athlete. This variable was manipulated by exposing participants to photos of athletes. Because race of the player was a between-subjects factor, participants assigned to one condition saw three photos of only Black athletes, three photos of only White athletes, or three photos of Latino athletes. The players were assigned fictitious

names based on a list of most common names in the United States reported by 2010 United States Census.

Stereotype consistency. Researchers exposed participants to descriptions of players that varied in terms of being consistent or inconsistent with racial stereotypes. For instance, a Black-consistent description would describe a Black athlete as high in physical ability while a Black-inconsistent description would describe a Black athlete as high in intelligence.

Covariates

Athlete attractiveness. This variable was measured using questions from previous studies that looked at the effects of attractiveness (Hart, Ottati, & Krumdick, 2011; Tsfati, Elfassi, & Waismel-Manor, 2010). A study had found that perceived attractiveness of players was a significant covariate in the participants' assessments (Ferrucci et. al, 2013). In the current study, researchers measured physical attractiveness of each player participants saw using three attractiveness items rated in a 5-point scale: attractive, ugly (reverse coded), and classy. After dropping the item "ugly," the reliability improved to *Cronbach's alpha* = .66.

Sports media use. The respondents were asked to rate in a 5-point scale how often they: watch sports news on television news programs, read sports sections in newspapers, read about sports online, listen to sports radio, read sports magazines, and watch cable sports networks (for example: ESPN, Fox Sports). The scale constructed from these statements was reliable: *Cronbach's alpha* was 0.93.

Gender. Since an independent t-test analysis revealed that males ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.13$) consume a significantly higher amount of sports media than females ($M = 2.29$, $SD = .91$), $F(419) = 10.64$, $p < .01$, the researchers also controlled for the effects of gender.

Sample

The average age was 19.37 ($SD = 3.73$). Most of the respondents were females (69.7%). The average sports media use was 2.61 out of 5, indicating that most of the participants were not heavy sports media users. Most of the respondents identified themselves as Caucasians (72.7%). Some 7.1% identified as Hispanics while 7.8% were African Americans. The rest were Asians (5.6%), Multi-racial (4.2%), and Native Americans (0.5%). Some 2% declined to respond. Initial analysis found that the respondent's race did not have any significant effect on ratings of the athletes.

FINDINGS

The researchers controlled for perceived attractiveness of players, sports media use, and respondent's gender. Initial analyses found that male participants tend to rate players higher in being flashy ($F(419) = .41$, $p < .01$; 2.81 vs. 2.64) and fiery ($F(419) = .72$, $p < .01$; 2.99 vs. 2.76) than did females. Perceived attractiveness of players was also a significant covariate, as the participants rated the players differently in perceived attractiveness, $F(2, 423) = 4.54$, $p < .01$. White ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .48$) and Black ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .41$) players were rated as more attractive than Latino players ($M = 2.77$, $SD = .46$). Sports media use did not have any significant effect.

The first three sets of hypotheses asked whether or not respondents would rate athletes consistently with racial stereotypes. Based on Wilks' statistic, race of player had a significant effect on perception of players, $\Lambda = .921$, $F(12, 824) = 2.88$, $p < .01$. H1

predicted that respondents would rate Black athletes the highest in terms of a) physical strength and b) natural ability. The respondents rated Black athletes ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .43$) higher than either White ($M = 3.27$, $SD = .47$) or Latino players ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .43$) on physical strength, $F(1, 417) = 9.68$, $p < .01$. The respondents also rated Black athletes ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .52$) higher than either White ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .48$) or Latino players ($M = 3.35$, $SD = .49$) on natural ability, $F(1, 417) = 3.60$, $p < .01$. Therefore, both H1a and H1b were supported.

H2 predicted that White athletes would be rated highest on a) leadership and b) intelligence. There were no differences in how the respondents rated Black, White, and Latino players based on intelligence ($F(1, 417) = .97$, $p > .05$) and leadership ($F(1, 417) = 1.26$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H2a and H2b were not supported.

H3 predicted that Latino athletes would be rated highest on being a) flashy and b) fiery. Black players ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .60$) were rated as more flashy than Latino ($M = 2.65$, $SD = .61$) or White players ($M = 2.62$, $SD = .58$), $F(1, 417) = 4.77$, $p < .01$. There were no significant differences in ratings for being fiery, $F(1, 417) = 2.50$, $p = .08$. Thus, both hypotheses were not supported.

The results are summarized in Table 1.

RQ1 asked if stereotype consistency, or describing players based on stereotypes, would affect source credibility. Thus, we looked at ratings of source credibility when the description offered is a) consistent (e.g. a White player is intelligent, a Black player is physically strong, a Latino player is fiery) and when it is b) inconsistent (e.g. a Black player is intelligent, a White player is flashy, a Latino player is physically strong). Repeated measures ANOVA showed that stereotype consistency affected credibility

ratings of the writer ($F(1, 423) = 10.74, p < .01$), albeit marginally based on the partial eta squared of .03. The writers of stereotype consistent descriptions were rated slightly higher ($M = 3.20, SD = .53$) than writers of stereotype inconsistent descriptions ($M = 3.11, SD = .41$) in terms of source credibility.

A way to probe this finding further is to test the effect of the athlete's race on the relationship between source credibility and stereotyping. In response to RQ2, the analysis found an interaction effect between race of player and stereotype consistency in terms of credibility ratings, $F(2, 423) = 39.12, p < .001$. Strikingly consistent with the previous study the current researchers sought to replicate, we found that a source was rated as most credible when stereotyping White athletes. When writing about White athletes, the source was rated more credible when the description was stereotype consistent ($M = 3.42, SE = .04$) than when it was stereotype inconsistent ($M = 3.06, SE = .03$). In contrast, when writing about Latino athletes, the source was rated more credible when the description was inconsistent with stereotypes ($M = 3.16, SE = .04$) than when it was consistent ($M = 2.99, SE = .04$). However, when it comes to Black players, there were no significant differences in credibility between sources who stereotyped Black players and those who did not. See Figure 1.

DISCUSSION

According to previous literature, the American public gets exposed to stereotypes while watching sports or reading about sports. Scholars found that announcers and journalists describe players of different races differently. Athletes are described in a stereotypical manner. Regardless of the sport, a Black athlete is far more likely to be called physically strong or described as having natural ability, while a journalist or

broadcaster is far more likely to describe a White athlete as a leader or intelligent.

Previous research on how journalists and broadcasters treat Latino players found that the athletes were often described as fiery or flashy. This experiment aimed to find out whether the constant appearance of these stereotypes in the media affected the public.

H1 predicted that participants would rate Black athletes higher in both physical strength and natural ability. Previous studies of stereotypes and baseball found this result (Ferrucci et al., 2013). The current study conforms to these previous results. The predominantly White sample stereotyped Black athletes. However, consistent with previous studies, the sample did not stereotype White athletes as intelligent or leaders; thus H2 was not supported. A plausible explanation for this finding lies in social identity theory and in-group and out-group biases. Because the sample was predominantly White, they viewed Black athletes as the out-group and White athletes as the in-group. Therefore, as argued by Linville and Fischer (1993), Brewer (1979), and Ferrucci et al. (2013), the sample participants were likely to stereotype the out-group but not the in-group, who they viewed as far more heterogeneous. Also, members of the in-group are likely not even to know stereotypes about their own group, and therefore would not even activate them, much less apply them (Linville & Fischer, 1993). Future studies should test H2 with a more diverse sample; this would allow us to see whether a diverse pool of participants apply stereotypes to both races or just to Black players.

The experiment also experimentally tested stereotypes concerning Latin baseball players as a way to advance research in this area. Major League Baseball currently features roughly three times as many Latino players as Black players; therefore, when examining stereotypes in baseball, a study should include Latino players. H3 predicted

that participants would rate Latin players higher in terms of flashiness and fieriness. This was not supported. This finding runs counter to previous literature. A conceivable reason for this might be that Latin players are only prevalent in professional baseball. Less than 1% of all players in the National Football League are Latino (Lapchick, 2013d), while only 4.4% of players in the National Basketball Association are Latino (Lapchick, 2013c). According to the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports, the National Hockey League is more than 97% White and features less than .2% Latin players (Lapchick, 2013a). Only baseball, which is 28.2% Latino, features a significant amount of Latino players. Previous literature (e.g., Angelini & Billings, 2010; Billings & Eastman, 2003; Rada & Wulfemeyer, 2005) found that stereotypes are consistent across sport. Because of this, one explanation for the current finding could be that people are exposed far more often to stereotypes of Black and White players. In fact, viewership numbers show that more people watch the NFL and the NBA than they do MLB (Gaines, 2014). Stereotypes take time to spread and for a significant amount of the population to hold them (Devine, 1989). It therefore certainly is possible that participants were not aware and did not hold stereotypes of Latino players and, subsequently, could not apply them.

Participants rated Black players as more flashy, which is one interesting finding concerning H3. Out of all six of the descriptors tested, flashy could be considered negative in some contexts, so it is interesting that respondents rated Black players as significantly more flashy even though it generally is considered a stereotype of Latino athletes. This finding also could be explained by in-group and out-group biases.

Participants encountered a negative stereotype and applied it to an out-group because

they were more likely to stereotype the “other.” This finding could show that fans stereotype Black athletes not simply in subtle ways but also in a more overt manner.

The first research question asked whether stereotype consistency, or describing players based on stereotypes, would affect source credibility. Participants rated stereotype-consistent messages as slightly more credible than stereotype-inconsistent messages. This finding could provide evidence that people do hold stereotypes of White, Black and Latino baseball players, even if participants only rated Black players to be higher in physical strength and natural ability. Arguably this action is a more applied form of stereotype application—individuals might be able to control the application of their own stereotypes in their own evaluations, but they still apply those stereotypes when evaluating the evaluations and behaviors of others. The participants may not have applied their stereotypes of White and Latino players, but in general, they rated writers of stereotypical descriptions as credible. This gets more interesting when we examine RQ2, which explored this relationship more deeply and found an interaction effect between the race of a player and stereotype consistency in terms of credibility ratings. When writing about White athletes, the source was rated more credible when the description was stereotype consistent. In contrast, when writing about Latino athletes, the source was rated more credible when the description was inconsistent with stereotypes. For Black players, there were no significant differences in credibility between sources who stereotyped Black players and those who did not.

This finding may seem counterintuitive to other results, but it is consistent with how people process stereotypes (Bodenhausen et al., 1999; Devine, 1989). In the experiment, the participants were primed with photos of baseball players of the same race

and were asked questions about the players. The exposure to the photos supposedly activated their stereotypes and the questions after each photo were meant to measure how they apply these stereotypes. The same process, however, might have made the participants aware about their own stereotypes, so that when they proceeded to the next section, where they were exposed to another writer's description of the player, they were already aware of their own stereotyping, that they might have been able to control it. Therefore, when writers were stereotyping the out-group for this study's predominantly White sample, the participants either did not find them credible (especially in the Latino condition). In contrast, the participants rated stereotypical descriptions of players within their own racial in-group as credible, plausibly because the motivation to control stereotyping, especially with respect to positive traits, within the in-group is low.

This study found some interesting and potentially illuminating results, most importantly that Latino stereotypes, possibly, have not yet taken hold. But there are some limitations to this study. First, the sample could have been more diverse. Our sample featured predominantly White subjects, with 72% identifying as White, 7.8% as Black and 7.1% as Latinos. Having a disproportionately White sample might have not allowed us enough statistical power to detect differences between participants of different races. Future research could use a diverse sample or, on the other hand, could over-sample Black or Latino respondents to see if subjects stereotyped out-groups.

Our sample also featured most females and came from only two universities. Our sample came from two very specific parts of the country and people in these parts could favor certain sports more than others. Since our sample did not come from the entire country, this must be noted as a limitation.

We also did not find any significant differences between participants of different races in terms of our dependent variables, but this could be because the sampling sizes per group did not have sufficient power to detect significant differences, owing to the very small size of the Black and Latino groups. Second, by using explicit measures to measure stereotypes, the researchers relied on self-reports, which, in the case of surveys or experiments, can always be deceiving (Van Sterkenburg et al., 2010). Third, while the sample had moderate levels of sports media use, future research could potentially only measure participants with high levels of sports media use, the very people most likely to encounter these stereotypes. Future research could also incorporate implicit measures to test the first stage of Devine's model. By testing whether subjects hold stereotypes concerning these three races, we would get closer to understanding, especially, whether Latin stereotypes are held by people.

However, despite these limitations, the vast majority of all research into stereotypes and sport examine content, and this study takes another necessary step in testing the effects of stereotype-laden sports journalism and sports broadcasting. It is important for journalists and broadcasters alike to understand not only the frequency by which they depend on race when labeling athletes, but the insidious effects, as shown by Essed (1991), this practice can have on the general public.

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