



Handbook of Sports and Media

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Sport, the Media, and the Construction of Race

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Race has been one of the most productive, and indeed important, areas of inquiry for those interested in the critical analyses of the relationship between sport and the mass media (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Bruce, 2004; Davis & Harris, 1998; McDonald & Birrell, 1999). Given that, as a major public arena, sport, and *media-sport* (Wenner, 1998) in particular, is a key site of contemporary corporeal display and consequently racial signification, this is perhaps hardly surprising. Indeed, Denzin (1996) argued that mediated sport is perhaps “the most significant feature” (p. 319) of a contemporary racial order in which race is increasingly understood through media representation. Its cultural import therefore means that the politics of racial presence and absence, as played out in the realm of the sport media, have wider implications for the reproduction and reinforcement of racial hierarchies and the patterns of identification this may generate. That is, mass-mediated sport is a site where ideologies of race (and racism) are both constructed and negotiated and thus acts as an important “signifier for wider questions about identity within racially demarcated societies” (Carrington, 2001/2002, p. 94). Further, the central role of mediated sports within the mass-media entertainment complex means that athletes, and athletes of color in particular, are increasingly important actors in the construction and reproduction of racial or ethnic identity. How athletes of color are represented in the sports media, or whether they are even represented at all, and the power of the sport media “in confirming and reconstructing images that are congruent with hegemonic discourses about social group relations” (van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004, p. 302), would thus seem to wholly justify the critical scholarly attention that the race-media-sport nexus has garnered.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of such research on the construction and representation of race in sport media texts. Obviously, given the scale, scope—in subject and academic discipline—and, of course, vibrancy of this literature, our

summary herein is by no means exhaustive. Our aim instead is to present a critical review of what could be termed a *representative literature* that provides some indication of the nature and variety of research examining the intersections of race, sport, and the media. One further caveat is that our focus is primarily on the United States and, in particular, African-American (male) athletes. This is in many ways a reflection of a general research trend: The vast majority of studies of race and ethnicity in the sports media have focused on African-American athletes, whether because of the extensive media coverage they receive or the limited coverage afforded to other athletes of color (see also the earlier review by Davis & Harris, 1998). In doing so we do not wish to deny an expanding literature on media coverage of Native-American (for example, see Banks, 1993; Davis, 1993; King & Springwood, 2001a, 2001b; King, Staurowsky, Baca, Davis, & Pewewardy, 2002), Latino/a(-American) (see Hoose, 1989; Jamieson, 2000; Klein, 2000; Rodriguez, 2002; Sabo, Jansen, Tate, Duncan, & Leggett, 1996), and Asian(-American) (see Sabo, et al., 1996) athletes nor devalue the important contributions of scholars critically analyzing the interconnections of race, sport, and the media in contexts outside the United States. Rather, and especially given the limits of space and the aims of this collection, it is to suggest that the representation of African Americans in the sports media provides an extensive and important body of research in and of itself.

REPRESENTING RACE: COVERAGE, CONTENT, AND STEREOTYPING

In this chapter, our primary focus is the issue of how athletes of color are, and have historically been, represented in the media. Certainly, we concur with Carrington (2001/2002) in his view that the process of representation should be seen as a "primary site for the construction and constitution of identities, collective and individual, rather than merely being a secondary reflection of already formed social identities" (p. 92), something well reflected in the fact that the vast majority of research on race, sport, and the media has been concerned with matters of representation and, in particular, the continuities and articulations of racial ideologies as manifest within the sports media. Notably, however, many early studies of race and ethnicity in the sports media were actually concerned with the *extent*, rather than *content*, of coverage.

In particular, several studies have suggested that black athletes have historically been underrepresented in the sports media. For instance, in their study of feature articles in *Sports Illustrated*, Lumpkin and Williams (1991) concluded that coverage of African-American male athletes was not proportional to their participation (see also Condor & Anderson, 1984). Similarly, Francis' (1990) analysis of *Sports Illustrated's* coverage of men's Division I basketball between 1954 and 1986 found that, despite their increasing participation, Black players nonetheless "received far fewer articles than their contribution to the sport seems to warrant" (as cited in Davis & Harris, 1998, p. 155). The limited coverage afforded Black athletes has also appeared across gender, with studies such as Williams' (1994)—who noted only five African-American women donning the cover of *Sports Illustrated* during a span of 1,835 issues—and Corbett's (1988)—who found limited coverage of African-American women across 14 different magazines—suggesting African-American women athletes are also underrepresented in the print media (see also Douglas, 2002; Green, 1993; Oglesby, 1981; Scraton, 2001). Though feature articles about Black athletes in magazines and newspapers have undoubtedly increased since these analyses were

conducted—arguably as a result of the increasing number of African-American players as opposed to a decline in media bias (Davis & Harris, 1998)—nevertheless, it would still appear that coverage in the print media is still well short of reflecting elevated rates of Black athletic participation.

Sport on television has been historically been characterized by similar trends of African-American underrepresentation. Though scholars such as Sabo et al. (1996) argued that race is not always a factor in determining the amount of coverage, there is nonetheless some evidence to suggest that African-American athletes have also been underrepresented in the televisual media (Davis & Harris, 1998; Sailes, 1993; Smith, 1995). For instance, in a study of the National Broadcasting Corporation's (NBC) coverage of the 1992 Olympics, Hilliard (as cited in Davis & Harris, 1998) noted that there were no features on Native Americans or Asian Americans and found that features on European-American men were more in-depth than features on African-American athletes. This could perhaps be reflective of a more general bias in the televisual media where researchers have shown African Americans "to be underrepresented (or nonexistent) in all areas of television programming" (Wilson & Sparks, 1996, p. 407).

Of course, though they may have historically been underrepresented in the televisual media, undoubtedly African-American athletes are now receiving increasing media coverage—in newspapers, on television, and in advertising. In fact, it could even be argued that, as Carrington (2001/2002) suggested, far from being marginalized, African-American athletes are now hyper-visible in the contemporary sport media. Such coverage afforded Black athletes could perhaps be seen as indicative of an end to discrimination, bias, and racism in the sport media. However, it more likely reflects the African-American dominance of professional sport in America. Even if overt racism—by way of exclusion and underreporting—may not be a feature of the contemporary sport media, mass-mediated sport is still nonetheless a key site for the construction and reinforcement of racist ideologies. Studies of the sport media have suggested that these ideologies include reproduction of the myth of natural African-American athletic superiority (Davis, 1990; Denham, Billings, & Halone, 2002; Sailes, 1993; Simons, 2003; Smith, 1990; Wonsek, 1992)—something which, by association, both essentializes and naturalizes categories of Black and White (Davis, 1990) as well as relies on the dissemination of stereotypical dumb jock (Sailes, 1993) representations of Black athletes; the demonization of male Black athletes by way of their articulation to stereotypical associations of African-American males with crime, deviance, and sexual promiscuity (Andrews, 1996b; Boyd, 1997b; Carrington, 2001/2002; Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Kellner, 1996; Lule, 1995; Maharaj, 1997); and the reinforcement of racial stereotypes relating to African-American males through the construction of a racial binary of atypical good Blacks and typical bad Blacks (Wenner, 1995; see also Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Boyd, 1997b, 2000; McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001; Shropshire, 2000; Wilson, 1997).

STEREOTYPING THE BLACK ATHLETE: THE SPORTING BLACK BODY AND RACIAL IDEOLOGIES

While we elaborate on these ideologies later, it is also important to note how, in addition to visual and narrative representations which reinforce racial stereotypes, the sport media further supports racism by portraying the presence and success of

African-American athletes as evidence of the absence of racism. To some at least, the coverage afforded African-American athletes may seem to symbolize a decline in, or at least delegitimation of, racism not only in the sports media, but also in society more generally. That is, the contemporary dominance of certain sports by African Americans, and Black men in particular, could be used to "reinforce an argument that the US is an open society, and that blacks are improving their economic and social positions" (Wonsek, 1992, p. 457). Given sport's symbolic significance, images of Black athletic success provide a persuasive counterargument to suggestions that the American racial meritocracy is a myth. As Cole (1996) argued, images of Black athletic success, of upward social and economic mobility, are "appealing because they offer faith in America, in the American system, and the American way of life" (p. 389; see also Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Baker, 2000; Goldman & Papson, 1998; Maharaj, 1997; McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001; Robbins, 1997; Sandell, 1995).

A number of authors have pointed to the way in which successful African-American athletes are framed within varying media discourses as symbolic validations of the American dream (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Baker, 2000; Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Davis & Harris, 1998; Goldman & Papson, 1998; Maharaj, 1997; McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001; Robbins, 1997; Sandell, 1995). For instance, Andrews (1996a) noted how the popular and promotional signification of basketball player Michael Jordan, in drawing on and actively mobilizing the discourses of a New Right neoliberal agenda, implied the continued efficacy of the rags-to-riches parable that is the American dream (see also Andrews, 1996b). Boyd (1997b), Cole (1996), Goldman and Papson (1998), McDonald (1996), and McDonald and Andrews (2001) similarly noted how Jordan's mediated identity alluded to, and served to reproduce, the myths of American racial democracy. Likewise, McKay (1995) argued in his analysis of athletic apparel advertising that the commercials often mythologized notions of individualism and meritocracy, "thereby allowing white audiences to deny the existence of institutionalized racism both in sport and American society in general" (Wilson, 1997, p. 178).

Numerous critics have suggested that one area of the media which has been especially powerful in regard to reinforcing this myth of American racial meritocracy has been cinema (Baker, 2000). Basketball films, both fictional and documentary, have been a particular topic of analysis and critique. For instance, Baker argued that movies, like most other media presentations of basketball, "avoid careful engagement with the moral and social complexities that confront working-class African American men" (p. 230) by instead suggesting that "personal initiative and achievement can overcome even the obstacle of racial discrimination" (p. 223). One film which has come under particular critical scrutiny is the 1994 documentary *Hoop Dreams* (see Baker, 2000; Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Mosher, 1995; Robbins, 1997; Sandell, 1995; Smith, 1995). Generally, these authors have suggested that while, superficially at least, the documentary appears to be a critique of both racial and class boundaries in the United States and the false promise of sport as a route to wealth and fame for the African-American working classes, it in fact reinforces the upward mobility myth "that it pretends to disapprove of... [the film fails to] take on the real issues of the inner city" (Robbins, 1997, p. 111). As Sandell (1995) concluded, "In an increasingly conservative climate, *Hoop Dreams* alleviates liberal guilt and reaffirms the belief that minority athletes can succeed at the American Dream *despite* an increase in structural and institutional oppression" (p. 67).

As these analyses suggest, the media frame sport, and the possibility of a professional sports career for African Americans (and African-American male youth in particular), as an escape from poverty and a means to circumvent the racial discrimination in many other occupations. Hence, as symbols of the American dream, successful Black athletes (Michael Jordan in particular; see Andrews, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Dyson, 1993; McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001) suggest that African Americans can, and regularly do, achieve both economic success and upward social mobility. As the authors cited previously allude to, the implication is that those who do not can be explained by individual moral inferiority as opposed to structural or systematic racism or racial prejudice (see Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Baker, 2000; Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Davis & Harris, 1998; Goldman & Papsen, 1998; Hartmann, 2000; Maharaj, 1997; McDonald, 1996; Robbins, 1997; Sandell, 1995; Soar, 2001). As Wilson and Sparks (1996) explained, the dominant message in nonstereotypical representations of Black athletic, social, and economic success is that the athletes in question "have reached this level of success because they take advantage of opportunities that poor Blacks do not" (p. 407). In displacing social and structural factors, and in emphasizing the efforts and achievements of individual Black athletes, the media imply that poverty is a result of "individual shortcoming" (Baker, 2000, p. 227) and "reinforce the view that the failure of the black underclass is their own" (Wilson, 1997, p. 185). Black athletic success stories thus falsely suggest sport to be a viable space for African-American social and economic advancement and provide African-American—and African-American men in particular—a "stereotypical representational politics that denies and even disavows the complexities of their cultural situation and the pluralistic nature of the subject positions they currently inhabit" (LaFrance & Rail, 2001, p. 41). Hence, although Black athletes often seek "status, respect, empowerment and upward mobility through athletic careers" (Dworkin & Messner, 1999, pp. 4–5) as a means of circumventing racial and class barriers, doing so within the venue of sports may actually reproduce racism and justify a system of racial inequality (Cole, 1996; Hartmann, 2000; Maharaj, 1997; Sandell, 1995; Smith, 1995).

In a similar fashion to the way in which they may serve to validate the myth of an American racial meritocracy, successful Black athletes are also often seen to symbolize American liberal, racial inclusiveness (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Andrews & Cole, 2000; Cole & Andrews, 2001; Crenshaw, 1997; Johnson & Roediger, 1997; McKay, 1995; Uchacz, 1998). Several authors have suggested that, implicitly at least, the media portray sport as a space devoid of racial discrimination; the mere presence of African-American athletes is "readily perceived as evidence of integration" (Douglas, 2002, para. 5.3). For instance, golfer Tiger Woods has often been framed within media discourse as the exemplar of a meritocratic, multicultural America (Andrews & Cole, 2000; Cole & Andrews, 2001; Uchacz, 1998). As Andrews and Cole (2000) argued, through various mediated texts, images, and narratives, Woods affirmed the seemingly multicultural nature of late 1990s America and came to symbolize American liberal, racial inclusiveness (see also Cole & Andrews, 2001; Uchacz, 1998). His presence within the elite, and historically racially segregated, space of golf means that Woods has often been used by the core American values and ideologies (i.e., those cultural intermediaries operating within the ratings-driven media and poll-driven centrist politics) as self-evident proof of the existence of an American color-blind meritocracy (Cole & Andrews, 2001). Similarly, McKay (1995) and Wonsek (1992) argued that the use of Black celebrity athletes within contemporary advertising—when the use of African Americans has

historically been avoided by advertising agencies (see Edwards, 1969; Greenberg & Brand, 1994; Wonsek, 1992)—could be used by those in the dominant White middle classes as means of denying both individual and societal racism.

Even if the increasing presence of African Americans within American popular and commercial cultures was emblematic of an end to discrimination, the ubiquity of representations that reinforce dominant and highly racialized stereotypes of the Black other is indicative of how racism is still prevalent in the mass media. These racial stereotypes are further accentuated by the fact that African Americans are overrepresented in some areas of media programming, such as comedy, music, and, of course, sport, while they are all but absent in others (see Greenberg & Brand, 1994; Real, 1989; Wonsek, 1992). Of the limited range of media genres and discourses within which African Americans, and especially African-American males, have been represented and described, the dominance of televised elite male sport by Black athletes and their overrepresentation in the "athletic paradigm of advertisements" (Wonsek, 1992, p. 456) are perhaps most problematic. In particular, the media's focus on "Black men as athletes," and the disproportionate coverage given to Black athletic achievement, further obscures "the diversity of everyday successes by African American men" (Wenner, 1995, p. 228). Moreover, and as we alluded to previously, overrepresentation implies that sport is one of the few potential routes of upward mobility for African-American youth. As critics such as Edwards (1969, 1973; see also Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Davis & Harris, 1998; Goldman & Papson, 1998; Smith, 1995) argued, the media and economic successes of Black athletes give African-American youth a false sense of "the very limited career prospects of collegiate and professional sport" (Wilson & Sparks, 1996, p. 399).

SPORT, THE BLACK ATHLETE, AND THE MYTH OF NATURAL PHYSICALITY

Arguably, the media's portrayal of sport as one of only a limited range of opportunities for social and economic mobility for African-American working class youth also serves to reinforce the myth of natural Black athleticism. By effacing socioeconomic environment, cultural modeling, communal norms, and familial expectations in favor of genetic explanations for Black athletic success, the natural athlete myth suggests that African Americans possess innate physiological advantages while conversely lacking the necessary skills and intelligence to succeed in other occupational areas (Bruce, 2004; Davis, 1990; Denham, Billings, & Halone, 2002; Murrell & Curtis, 1994; Sailes, 1993; Smith, 1990). The stereotype further implies that White athletes are "disadvantaged relative to black athletes, who are seen as having superior physiology" (Davis & Harris, 1998, p. 158). Studies such as Andrews' (1996a, 1996b), Davis' (1990), Sailes' (1993), and Smith's (1995) all suggested that televised elite male sport plays an important part in promoting such "stereotypical and divisive, yet common-sense, embodied articulations of race and racial difference" (Andrews, 1996b, p. 132). Indeed, Bruce (2004) argued that "representations of natural black physicality continue to be reproduced in live sports television" (p. 875).

Likewise, numerous other researchers have also found this natural black athlete stereotype to be common in other areas of the sport media (Andrews, 1996b; Davis, 1990; Denham, Billings, & Halone, 2002; Jackson, 1987, 1989; Murrell & Curtis, 1994; Sailes, 1993; Smith, 1990; Staples & Jones, 1985). For instance, Jackson (1989) found that, in comparison to White athletes, the performances of Black athletes are

more often attributed to innate physical skill, and he elsewhere also argues that media discourses, both visual and narrative, often portray African Americans as *naturally* athletic (see also Jackson, 1987). Similarly, Staples and Jones (1985) found in their analysis of Black television images that "black excellence on the [sports] field was interpreted as a function of genetically endowed skills" (pp. 13-14), and van Sterkenburg and Knoppers (2004) also suggested that a "natural physicality discourse" is often used by those in the media to "explain the great number of black athletes in certain events and sports" (p. 312).

Such stereotypes are reinforced by the fact that African-American athletes receive the greatest media coverage in sports such as track and field and basketball, as natural athleticism is, as Jackson (1987) noted, most commonly associated with physiological advantages in speed and jumping ability (see also Davis, 1990; Smith 1990). Thus, it is perhaps hardly surprising that, in their analysis of audience responses to dominant discourses about race and ethnicity in sport, van Sterkenburg and Knoppers (2004) reported: "Both black and white respondents used (a natural physicality) discourse to attribute the relative over-representation of black athletes in certain sports/events (sprinting events and basketball) to difference in bodily explosive power" (p. 307).

In contrast to Black athletes, who are frequently framed in terms of their physicality, White athletes are most often depicted as relying on intellectual means to achieve their sporting success (Davis, 1990; Denham, Billings, and Halone, 2002; Murrell & Curtis, 1994; Smith, 1990). Research has suggested that while Black athletes are often praised for being naturally talented, White athletes are often praised for either their hard work or perceived intellect and leadership (Denham, Billings, & Halone, 2002; Eastman & Billings, 2001; Jackson, 1989; Murrell & Curtis, 1994; Wonsek, 1992). As Bruce (2004) suggested, "North American sports commentators and journalists tend to identify male white players as leaders and hard workers and represent male black players as *athletes* with little reference to hard work or intellect" (p. 861). Murrell and Curtis' (1994) analysis of print media coverage of National Football League (NFL) quarterbacks similarly found that the performance of Black quarterbacks was characterized by *innate* ability, whereas the performance of White quarterbacks was attributed to the notion of "intellect." Wonsek (1992) argued that such stereotypes also "seem to operate in relation to the commercial advertisements which are an integral part of the media broadcasts" (p. 460), an observation supported by Dufur (1998), who found in her examination of the representation of Black and White athletes in print media advertising that the Black athletes were more commonly portrayed in terms of their physicality or athleticism as opposed to White athletes, who were characterized in terms of their character or intellect.

A further finding of the study by Murrell and Curtis (1994) was the way in which the success of White quarterbacks was often attributed to effort rather than physical ability. This notion of effort is in many ways typical of the way in which the natural athlete stereotype also reinforces the assumption that White athletes are more hardworking than Black athletes. Indeed, a number of studies have found that the media depict the efforts of White athletes more often than those of Black athletes (Cole & Andrews, 1996; Jackson, 1987, 1989; Murrell & Curtis, 1994; Sailes, 1993; Smith, 1990). In suggesting that White athletes are more hardworking, the sport media devalues the work of Black athletes, implies that black athletes are lazy, and further naturalizes Black athletic skill as being biologically-based (Bruce, 2004; see also Davis, 1990). The stereotype that Black athletes purportedly rely on

innate physical advantages also implies that Black athletes lack discipline and application, something further reinforced by the way in which Black athletic success is often attributed to the guidance or skill of a White coach or White authority figure (see Andrews 1996b; Robbins, 1997). Thus, although many elite televised sports may be dominated by Black players, "these images are mitigated and undercut by the overwhelming predominance of white images, some of which represent individuals in positions of authority (coaches and sportscasters). Not only does this place the Black players in a secondary and entertainment role, but it may also serve to reassure the White majority that its dominance is not really being threatened" (Wonsek, 1992, p. 454; see also Thomas, 1996).

CRIME, DRUGS, AND (SEXUAL) DEVIANCE: THE MEDIA CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK SPORTING MASCULINITY

Further to laziness and lack of leadership, intellect, and discipline—attributes embodied by, and implied in, presuppositions of natural athleticism—the sports media also reflect and reproduce a number of wider racialized discourses associated with African Americans, and African-American masculinity in particular. As Andrews (1996b) argued, the representation of Black athletes in the media commonly reflects and reinforces the more general portrayal of African-American males as deviant, unruly, violent, and animalistic—or, as he suggests, generally "threats to society"—in popular cinema, television, literature, and the print media (see also Boyd, 1997a, 1997b; Staples & Jones, 1985). Likewise, Smith (1995) contended that representations of the familial failings, drug usage, and other forms of deviance among Black male athletes is common in both public and media discourse, and Wenner (1995) also noted how portrayals of Black athletes as naturally threatening correspond with the more conventional negative and stereotypical portrayals of Blackness (see also Boyd, 1997a, 1997b; Cole, 1996; Wilson, 1997; Wonsek, 1992). Such depictions are believed to lead some audiences to draw a parallel between deviant African-American male athletes and wider criminality among African-American males in society (see Leonard, chap. 31, this volume, as well as Cole, 1996; Wilson & Sparks, 1996).

Allusions to the supposed off-field criminality of African-American male athletes are particularly common in the sport media. For instance, Cole and Andrews (1996) argued that the re-imaging of the NBA in the 1990s was an attempt to distance the league from the popular public and media associations of its players with drugs, gambling, and criminality (see also Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Cole & Denny, 1995; Shropshire, 2000). As Cole and Andrews contended, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the mediation of the NBA reinforced dominant and residual discourses of African-American masculinity. Reflecting the "racist rhetoric" of the American New Right, the NBA was seen as too black and too drug infested to appeal to marketers or ever become a truly popular element of American culture (see Cole & Andrews, 1996; Shropshire, 2000). Though Black players such as Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson undoubtedly helped make the NBA of the mid-1980s and early 1990s accessible to the White middle class consumer (see Andrews, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Cady, 1979; Cole & Andrews, 1996; Cole & Denny, 1995), Boyd (1997b) argued that the contemporary promotion of the Black NBA basketball player, often through popular narratives of deviance, violence, and laziness, similarly situates the Black sporting celebrity

in a discourse of working class, masculine, urban society, or what he terms *nigga culture*—regardless of his economic wealth. Similarly, Boyd and Shropshire (2000) also suggested, “the present generation of NBA stars are depicted as synonymous with greed, arrogance, selfish individualism, and an overall disrespect that has often embarrassed the ‘positive image’-driven league” (p. 10).

In many, if not most, cases, the purported failings of the Black community are seen as the explanation for both the purported selfishness or the sexual or criminal deviance of African-American athletes. Supposedly a reflection of African-American culture more generally, the deviance of African-American athletes is often linked to stereotypes of single-parent families, welfare dependency, drugs, and crime (Cole 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Goldman & Papson, 1998; Hartmann, 2000; Maharaj, 1997; Robbins, 1997). This is perhaps most evident in the way in which African-American male athletes are commonly linked to the discourses and narratives of threatening urban Black masculinity (Boyd, 1997a, 1997b; Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Goldman & Papson, 1998; Maharaj, 1997; Robbins, 1997; Shropshire, 2000; Walton, 2001; Wilson, 1997). For instance, in his analysis of media constructions of African-American athletes in Canadian basketball, Wilson (1997) found that “both print and electronic portrayals stereotyped African-Americans as criminal, arrogant, unruly, undisciplined and threatening” and that, “although explicit references to race were not made, there were powerful, subtle associations with the inner-city, gangs and crime on the one hand, and African-American basketball players on the other” (p. 184). Maharaj (1997) similarly noted the discursive link, in advertising and the media more generally, between African-American basketball players and the “street,” wherein the “street” is associated with “black male lawlessness, parental irresponsibility, and emasculation” (p. 97).

Interestingly, however, while the links between Black athletes, and particularly Black NBA basketball players, and crime in Black communities may be a common narrative, the media also suggests sport as an alternative to Black deviance (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Goldman & Papson, 1998; McDonald, 1996; Wenner, 1994). Within this sport-crime binary, sport is positioned as providing poor African-American youth with direction and purpose, “while socializing them into responsible citizens” (Goldman & Papson, 1998, p. 111). As Cole (1996, p.371) argued, the stereotype is often presented in terms of a mediated discourse which positions urban Black youths within an oppositional “sport/gang dyad.” According to Cole and King (1999), the media promote two common tropes of Black culture in America: black youths redeemed by following the right path (sport) or, alternatively, the failed black family leading to the wrong path (gangs and drugs) (Cole & King, 1999; see also Cole & King, 1998). Such stereotypes not only offer limited visions of the Black experience in sport, and society more broadly—and especially those associations with violence and criminality—but further serve to reproduce a neoliberal ideology which pathologizes Black communities while failing to address social and systemic inequality (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999; Hartmann, 2000; Maharaj, 1997; Robbins, 1997; Sandell, 1995). In particular, “the sport/gang dyad, its corresponding somatic reterritorialization, and its exclusions, not only inscribe racialized criminal and threatening masculinity and stabilize fundamental categories embedded in ‘America,’ but produce desires for policing, punishment, and revenge directed at African American inner city youth” (Cole, 1996, p. 371).

Despite the fact that Black athletes are commonly linked to deviance, violence, and criminality, Berry and Smith (2000) argued that there is no data which supports

the notion that African-American sports figures are more likely to be engaged in crime than White sports figures. Just as African Americans are overrepresented in the reporting of crime in the general media, Berry and Smith (2000) instead suggested that the associations between race, sport, and crime are misrepresented in the sports media. In comparing the disproportionate coverage of the crimes of Black professional athletes to the overrepresentation of African Americans in media reporting of crime in general, their findings suggest that the attribution of criminal activity to African-American athletes mirrors that of young Black men more generally.

A further finding of the research by Berry and Smith (2000) was that, of the crimes involving Black athletes reported by the media, the majority were related to either assault and battery or drugs and alcohol. Although this is certainly something supported by other research (Donohew, Helm, & Haas, 1989; Messner & Solomon, 1993; Walton, 2001), public associations of African-American athletes with either assault and drugs have also been reinforced by high-profile criminal trials such as those of boxers Sugar Ray Leonard (see Messner & Solomon, 1993) and Mike Tyson (see Carrington, 2001/2002; Lule, 1995; Sloop, 1997) and football player O. J. Simpson (see Barak, 1996; Crenshaw, 1997; Johnson & Roediger, 1997). The media discourse surrounding these trials was largely characterized by the use of stereotypical associations of drug use, violence, and sexual abuse to Black athletes and Black masculinity. For instance, in their critical examination of the newspaper coverage surrounding the 1990 divorce trial of Sugar Ray Leonard—during which Leonard admitted to using drugs in the three years following his retirement from boxing and to physically abusing his spouse—Messner and Solomon (1993, p. 119) argue that the press formulated their discourse around the “jock-on-drugs” theme which already dominated sports media coverage of Black athletes. Carrington (2001/2002), Lule (1995), Sloop (1997), and Walton (2001) also examined the ways in which the media frame assault and domestic violence among Black athletes. These studies have suggested that the Black (male) body is a significant site through which notions of athleticism and animalism provide the discursive boundaries within which Black subjecthood is framed. In particular, Carrington (2001/2002) contended that the sports media “have played a central role in biologising black performance via their constant use of animalistic similes to describe black athletes” (p. 94; see also Jackson’s [1998] analysis of the media coverage of Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson). An example is the media coverage of the 1992 rape trial of former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson, in which Tyson’s Blackness often served to position him as a violent, sexual predator (see Carrington, 2001/2002; Lule, 1995; Sloop, 1997). As Sloop (1997) contended, throughout the trial, the media constructed a racialized discourse of Tyson which framed him as a “man-beast-machine,” something which “worked to position him as likely to be guilty of rape” (p. 102). Similarly, in his examination of the newspaper coverage of the trial, Lule (1995) found that the media mobilized two common stereotypical tropes of African Americans: the “animal savage” stereotype and the “hapless victim” stereotype (Lule, 1995, p. 177). He suggested that the news coverage during a nine-month span immediately following the launch of a police investigation against Tyson often reinforced pervasive notions of the violent, athletic Black body (Lule, 1995).

As the Tyson case attests, crime, violence, and the Black male athlete are also often connected to sexuality in media discourse. As Rowe, McKay, and Miller (2000) contended, the mediated image of “the black male sporting body, like that of the black male pop star, is a heavily sexualized one” (p. 259). Carrington (2001/2002) argued that questions of race and racism “have from the outset inherently connected

with wider issues concerning the social organisation and display of sexuality," and further suggested that "historical colonial fantasies about the excesses of black sexuality continue to exercise a hegemonic role in the representation of blackness" (Carrington, 2001/2002, p. 91). Certainly, Tyson's case is also illustrative in that it reflects many of the traditional discourses of Black masculinity, and particularly those relating to Black male sexual promiscuity. As further example, in her analysis of representations of the Black male athlete within professional basketball, Tucker (2003) concluded that "historical images of Black men as hypersexual criminals inform contemporary responses to, and representations of, Black male basketball players" (p. 307).

The case of basketball player Earvin "Magic" Johnson is also illustrative of the way in which race, sexuality, and media stereotypes may intersect. Studies by both Cole and Denny (1995) and King (1993), for instance, argued that that Johnson's announcement in 1991 that he was HIV positive undermined his status as an embodiment of 1990s American New Right racial ideology: a hard bodied, disciplined, racially understated African American. Subsequently, Johnson was discursively situated within a media discourse which appropriated and reinforced a range of stereotypes about Black sexual promiscuity (Cole & Andrews, 1996; Cole & Denny, 1995; King, 1993). McDonald (1996) argued that images of African American men, and particularly African American male athletes, have historically reproduced and reinforced "racist and sexist meanings that associate African Americans with nature, animality, hypersensuality, and eroticism" (p. 345), and, similarly, the media positioned Johnson as confirmation of the "perceived sexual excesses of black masculinity" (Carrington, 2001/2002, p. 98). In sum, the cases of Tyson and Johnson are testament to Carrington's (2001/2002) contention that sport, and mediated sport in particular, has been perhaps the primary arena in which colonial myths about Black sexuality and power have been most clearly expressed.

SPORT, THE BLACK ATHLETE, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF RACIAL TRANSCENDENCE

Studies of race in the sports media therefore largely suggest that African-American male athletes are most commonly associated with discourses of deviance, sexual promiscuity, and criminality and are often portrayed as selfish, lacking discipline, arrogant, and disrespectful. Further, as Smith (1995) suggested, there has traditionally been little coverage given to African American athletes who contradict these stereotypical norms of Black culture; rather, counternarratives are often neglected in favor of commonplace discourses of Blackness. In some instances, however, African-American athletes have been able to distance themselves from these stereotypes and subsequently achieve wider mainstream, that is, White, appeal. Perhaps the most famous example is basketball player Michael Jordan who, in contrast to traditional stereotypes of the Black athlete, was portrayed throughout much of his career as hardworking and disciplined (see Andrews, 2001; McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001). In both the popular and sporting media, Jordan's imaged identity was distanced from the racial signifiers which dominated popular representations of African-American males. This was because corporate image makers recognized that, if he was to become an American sporting icon, they could not afford to explicitly associate him with the threatening expressions of Black culture and experience (see Andrews, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; McDonald, 1996; McDonald &

Andrews, 2001). As Baker (2000) contended, this "narrative conflict" was characterized by an "exceptional/pathological, Michael Jordan/gansta character quality that dominates media representation of black basketball in particular and African Americans in general" (2003, p. 38). In advertisements for sponsors such as Nike and in televised coverage of the NBA, Jordan was promoted as the atypical African-American male, stripping him of his Blackness and the negative signifiers of African-American otherness (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b). As Andrews (1996a, 1996b) argued, Jordan's popular appeal was predicated upon the downplaying of his race or racial *Otherness*, achieved primarily through counterposing his mediated image against the more traditional signifiers of Black masculinity (sexual promiscuity, crime, violence); thus, the "phenomenal—and radically *atypical*—success" of Jordan "as an enormously wealthy, black basketball star and media celebrity" can be attributed "at least in part to the successful preclusion of these particular associations" (Soar, 2001, p. 39).

Comparable examples of this downplaying of race are Nike's recent advertisements for golfer Tiger Woods and the reimagining of the NBA in the 1980s discussed in brief previously (see also Houck, chap. 28, this volume). In the case of Woods, Andrews and Cole (2000) noted how Nike attempted to promote a more inclusive, less threatening version of Woods' "otherness" after early commercial failings in which they tried to "African Americanize" (p. 115) him (see also Cole & Andrews, 2001; Uchacz, 1998). In a similar fashion, Cole and Andrews (1996) suggested that the reimagining of the NBA in the 1990s was characterized by marketing campaigns which provided more accommodating images of African-American athletes and promoted more acceptable, racially understated representations of Black America (see also Cole & Denny, 1995; Shropshire, 2000). Notably, Jordan in particular played a crucial role in making the NBA accessible to the White American populace, who had previously been turned off, and turned away, by the game's overtly Black identity and demeanor (see Cady, 1979; Cole & Andrews, 1996; Cole & Denny, 1995; Shropshire, 2000).

Arguably, athletes such as Jordan and Woods are indicative of the way in which "many of the White population are gracious enough to accept, even adulate, African Americans, but only if they do not explicitly assert their Blackness" (Andrews, 1996b, p. 140). As Shropshire (2000) concurred, "those Black performers who have been widely accepted project images that are raceless, colorless, and apolitical" (p. 83). A number of scholars have noted how, in order to garner popular appeal, people of color are encouraged to abdicate their racial or ethnic identities and be seen to assimilate into the practices, values, and ideologies of mainstream white America (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b; Johnson & Roediger, 1997; McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001; Wenner, 1995; Wilson, 1997). Hence, even though African-American athletes may be accepted within contemporary popular and commercial cultures, Black athletic celebrities are often framed within visual and narrative discourses which are seemingly unconnected to race or are race "neutral" (Goldman & Papson, 1998): "A celebrity athlete—so long as he had a personality, or appeared to have a personality—proved to be a commodity that seemed unconnected to race as a category" (p. 100). Thus, as Johnson and Roediger (1997) contended, the nonthreatening rearticulation of the Black other is perhaps a better reflection of a seemingly progressive marketplace rather than an actual progressive politics.

Furthermore, these atypical African-American celebrities may actually exemplify and reinforce many of the dominant racial meanings associated with typical African-American males (Andrews, 1996a, 1996b). Black athletes such as Tyson,

and even other Black basketball players such as Latrell Sprewell (see Walton, 2001) and Dennis Rodman (see Dunbar, 2000; Lafrance & Rail, 2001), are "more often than not, situated contentiously in relation to more disciplined images and cultural roles of other Black male athletes" (Tucker, 2003, p. 321) such as Jordan or Woods. Thus, as Andrews (1996b) argued in the case of Jordan, rather than *transcending* their Blackness, *atypical* African-American athletes may actually act as agents for the *displacement* of stereotypical black signifiers onto the bodies of typical black Others.

Moreover, in the popular media, the supposed racelessness of athletes such as Jordan and Woods is often negotiated, and race can be reinscribed. For instance, Andrews (1996b) suggested that media coverage of Jordan's gambling threatened to undermine his race-neutral status and therefore his appeal to White mainstream audiences. Similarly, Crenshaw (1997), Johnson and Roediger (1997), and Wenner (1995) suggested O. J. Simpson was once been "perhaps America's most raceless black man . . . the triumph of the discursive paradigm of colorblindness" (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 102; see also Barak, 1996). Carefully mediated, Simpson was corporate America's Black ideal, his "seemingly colorless" image a "valuable commodity" (Johnson & Roediger, 1997, p. 199) to appeal to the White middle classes. Yet, both during and following his 1994 double-murder trial, media coverage served to reinscribe and rearticulate Simpson's Blackness: Although the Simpson case was originally framed within the "liberal" narrative structure of "colorblindness" (Crenshaw, 1997, p. 98), it was replaced by polarizing discourses of accountability, criminality, and victimization; "the nefarious consequence of an unjustified departure from colorblindness reduce[d] complex issues of institutional power, racially divergent subjectivities, intersections of race, gender, and class, and a host of other issues all onto one flattened plane of race" (Crenshaw, 1997; see also Barak, 1996; Wenner, 1995).

COMMODYFING BLACKNESS: SPORT, "THE STREET," AND THE SELLING OF RACE

However, while the race of African-American athletes may have been traditionally downplayed as a means of gaining popular appeal, several authors have argued that more recently there has been a commodification of Blackness, and the Black athletic body in particular, within even mainstream media marketing. It would seem that explicit representations of race are more prevalent within today's cultural economy, and racial difference has been increasingly appropriated as a means to sell to particular markets (Boyd, 1997a, 1997b; Carrington, 2001/2002; Goldman & Papson, 1998; Maharaj, 1997; Sandell, 1995). This is particularly true of the corporate and commercial appropriation of images of the postindustrial, inner city, something which has traditionally been associated with the stereotypes of what Maharaj (1997) referred to as "urban blackness" (p. 100): unemployment, crime, poverty, welfare dependency, and drugs (see also Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999). Several authors have suggested that street culture, and more specifically the culture of Black urban male youth, is often used by the commercial media as a means of denoting an authentic Blackness that appeals to White, middle class consumers (Cole, 1996; Goldman & Papson, 1998; Maharaj, 1997; Sandell, 1995). As Goldman and Papson (1998) noted in their analysis of the relationship between race and class in Nike commercials, advertisers often "[invoke] images of poverty and inner city children

in order to turn them into the currency of legitimacy" (p. 116). Likewise, Maharaj (1997) argued that in the mid-1990s advertisers (most notably Nike) attempted to distance themselves from the purported overcommercialization of professional basketball—and, more specifically, spectator's and consumer's resentment of exponentially increasing players' salaries—through commercials which appealed to "the 'purity' of the game's 'roots' as an urban community practice" (p. 104). Thus, the postindustrial city was made economically productive "through its symbolic representation as the locus of racial and sexual difference" (Maharaj, 1997, p. 101; see also Cole, 1996; Cole & King, 1998, 1999).

Arguably, this "selling of the most strident forms of African American discourse" (Boyd, 1997, p. 140) is indicative of the way in which "difference" has become perhaps *the commodity*" (Maharaj, 1997, p. 101) in postmodern consumer culture. For instance, Maharaj (1997) suggested that attempts to commodify the connection between the street (and the popular racial signifiers encoded therein) and Black sport culture reflects the prevailing late capitalist logic of consumption of, and through, difference (Maharaj, 1997). Similarly, Carrington (2001/2002) and Boyd (1997a, 1997b) both argued that strident Blackness has been an increasingly valued marker of difference and cultural hipness, particularly among young, White, middle-class consumers (see also Maharaj, 1997; Sandell, 1995). Thus, as Boyd (1997b) contended, "no longer off limits, all forms of Black popular culture are fair game for representation within the massive circuit of entertainment" (p. 140). He cited Charles Barkley as an illustration of an African-American athlete who is both demonized and capitalized upon through his recurring Blackness, something apparent in the way in which Nike's presentation of Barkley's Blackness is packaged under the guise of rebellion and sold to mass audiences as authentic nigger culture (see Boyd, 1997b) (see also Boyd, 1997a). The media, and advertising in particular, has therefore reduced difference to a cultural commodity (see Sandell, 1995) and valorized "a particular, mediated notion of urban blackness" (Soar, 2001, p. 51), which connects non-Black, suburban youth to only "the most desirable aspects of urban black male experience and physicality—all from a safe and sanitized distance" (Soar, 2001, p. 53).

As Soar alluded, this contemporary "commodification of blackness" is problematic in that, "through it, black bodies function as racialised symbols of cultural difference, without of course challenging the unequal power relationships that structure this consumption" (Carrington, 2001/2002, pp. 108–109; see also Goldman & Papsen, 1998; Sandell, 1995). The fact that otherness is being produced for consumption also means that difference is required to be rendered both acceptable and understandable to mainstream audiences. Within corporate capitalism, "differences based on cultural and social identities are often acceptable only as long as they either assimilate into mainstream culture or remain at a safe distance where they can be consumed as an alternative or exotic cultural experience" (Sandell, 1995, p. 57). Therefore, the commodification of the Black athletic body, and the commercial appropriation and exploitation of Blackness as a means of market differentiation more generally, certainly has implications for the oppositional potential of both multicultural and Black politics. As Sandell (1995) argued, "much of the political import of the critical multicultural agenda" has been undermined by the way in which "hegemonic capitalism" has reduced "difference" and "marginality" "to commodities to be bought and sold in the marketplace" (p. 57). Likewise, Carrington (2001/2002) noted how, despite the "hyper-visibility of blacks within media culture," there has been "no concomitant developments within the public sphere of black

political mobilisation" (p. 104). Though the culture industries may make substantial investments in Blackness, taking the visibility—and consumption—of Blackness as emblematic of racial progress and the demise of racial prejudice, this may actually serve to obscure the real social, political, and economic conditions faced by many African Americans (Goldman & Papson, 1998; Maharaj, 1997; Sandell, 1995). Carrington (2001/2002) suggested, furthermore, that the spectacle of the Black athletic body has "simultaneously diminished the space for progressive politics itself. . . . It appears that we have moved from a position of black athletes embodying a politics of social transformation to politics itself being reduced to the bodies of individual athletes" (pp. 104–106). Increasingly, African Americanness is defined through bodies engaged in characteristic activities—usually sexual or sporting—while Blackness has increasingly become a commercially inspired reflection of difference produced for consumption, predominantly by White audiences, which expresses no real oppositional politics. It seems that within the context and logics of capitalism there has been an "emptying out both the possibilities of sport as a transformative sphere, and of black culture as a site of resistance" (Carrington, 2001/2002, pp. 118–119).

This is not to suggest that sport, and in particular mediated sport, does not provide a potential space for the challenging of racist stereotypes and of racism more generally. Indeed, as Messner (1992) argued, certain groups of people have been able to "use sport as a means to resist (at least symbolically) the domination imposed upon them," and thus sport must "be viewed as an institution through which domination is not only imposed, but also contested" (p. 13). However, while the sport media have attempted to address "past criticisms of prejudicial treatment of blacks"—something evident in the "lower use of physical descriptors and negative evaluations with reference to black athletes" (Sabo, et al., 1996, p. 13; see also Bruce, 2004; Messner & Sabo, 1994; Sabo & Jansen, 1994)—as we have argued in this chapter, the increasing visibility of and coverage afforded African-American athletes should not necessarily be seen as indicative of a reduction of racism in the sport media. Moreover, even if there has been a decline in overt forms of racism within the sport media (traditionally exhibited in areas such as underrepresentation, underreporting, and biased commentaries), the media nonetheless supports racist discourses and beliefs through stereotypical portrayals of Black athletes as lazy, lacking discipline, deviant, or naturally athletic.

CONCLUSION: THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MARGINALITY IN THE SPORT MEDIA

Given that these stereotypical, simplistic conceptions of racial otherness and "images of blackness are actively implicated in the reinscription of dominant norms and codes" (Lafrance & Rail, 2001, p. 44), further critical analysis of the discursive boundaries of Blackness, as suggested by the mediated Black athletic body, is therefore required. As cultural representations "operate to sustain specific power relationships between groups and therefore influence lived cultures" (Carrington, 2001/2002), there is a need to trace how the meanings embedded within cultural representation serve to regulate and reproduce themselves as resources or sites for the construction of Black identity. In particular, there is a demand for ethnographic audience research which examines how mediated discourses of race are decoded, or read, by consumers. As Davis and Harris (1998) argued, "it is important to move

beyond speculating about media effects and begin real audience study. We need to understand what audience members from different social categories bring to their readings of sport media texts, and how varied social contexts shape meaning" (p. 168). Sport media texts should be seen as sites of negotiation and contestation "which different social groups use to create and sustain discourses about social relations of power" (van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004, p. 303), and thus "audience research is necessary for understanding what audiences do with" these texts (Wilson & Sparks, 1996, p. 400). The relationship between texts and social subjects is dialogic, and the "encoded" message is "not guaranteed to be decoded in accordance with its producer's intentions" (Wilson & Sparks, 1996, p. 402; see also Hall, 1980). Hence, there is a need to examine the processes through which media representations of the African-American athlete are interpreted and assimilated.

As the studies we make reference to in this chapter perhaps suggest, currently, the vast majority of work on race, sport, and the media focused on the encoded and encoding of meanings and the politics of representation within the sport media. The extent to which audiences, particularly those members of specific ethnic groups, "reject, negotiate or may be complicit in maintaining hegemonic discourses has received relatively little attention from researchers" (van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004, p. 305; see also Wilson, 1997; Wilson & Sparks, 1996). The few exceptions include Wilson and Sparks' (1996) study of the interpretation of apparel commercials by both Black and White youth communities in Canada, Armstrong's (1999, 2000) and Bierman's (1990) similar studies of Black youth in the United States, and van Sterkenburg and Knoppers' (2004) analysis of the dominant discourses concerning race and sport used by White and Black students in the Netherlands. If, as numerous scholars have suggested (Radway, 1991; Wilson, 1997; Wilson & Sparks, 1996), meaning is produced in an active negotiation between audiences and texts and "textual interpretations are related to the social locations of readers" (Wilson, 1997, p. 186), then it is necessary to complement textual analysis with further ethnographic studies of this sort (Radway, 1991; Wenner, 1991, 1994; Wilson, 1997; Wilson & Sparks, 1996). As Wilson (1997) argued, "reception studies are also needed in order to discern how different audiences consume messages about race and sport, and which groups should be targeted with initiatives derived from this kind of research (beyond the public accountability issues raised with the media producers)" (p. 186).

Similarly, there is a need for further analysis of the politics and practices of the production of sport media texts and how these serve to reinforce, reproduce, or even challenge the dominant discourses of the Black athlete within media culture. As Bruce (2004) noted, although several authors—"reading off texts" (p. 864)—suggest that the sports media may be more informed about, and have attempted to address, issues of race and racism (see Messner & Sabo, 1994; Sabo & Jansen, 1998), conclusions based on texts alone must be nonetheless considered conjectural "without investigating the practices, conventions and beliefs of those involved in the production of sport media texts" (Bruce, 2004, p. 864). As Soar (2001) argued, we "need a better understanding of the cultural intermediaries and their relationship to the Text" (p. 47) and therefore further ethnographies of production which complement both textual and audiences' analyses of the intersections of sport, race, and the media.

As we suggested previously, although there has been a great deal of research done on race and ethnicity in the sports media, "it has largely focused on black men" (Douglas, 2002, para. 1.6; see also Scraton, 2001). As Davis and Harris (1998)

concluded, "Research on racial/ethnic stereotyping in the sports media has focused on the portrayal of African-American athletes to the relative exclusion of other racial/ethnic categories" (p. 164). The few exceptions include studies such as those by Hoose (1989), Jamieson (2000), Klein (2000), Rodriguez (2002), and Sabo et al. (1996) that have examined the portrayal of Latino/a-Americans in the sport media; research such as by Sabo et al. (1996) examining the coverage of Asian-American athletes; and studies examining media representation of Native-American athletes and the issue of Native-American mascots (see, for example, Banks, 1993; Davis, 1993; King & Springwood, 2001a, 2001b; King, et al., 2002). The fact that these studies are so relatively few, especially in relation to those concerned with the Black male athlete, suggests that there is a need for additional research which examines the ways in which other marginalized social categories—and particularly, other ethnic or racial categories such as Native-Americans, Latino/a-Americans, and Asian-Americans—have been trivialized, stereotyped, or excluded by the mainstream sports media.

Further, there is also a need to examine "the intersection of race and gender" (Douglas, 2002, para. 1.6) in the sports media. As Douglas (2002, para. 1.6; see also Green, 1993; Oglesby, 1981; Smith, 1983; Scraton, 2001) noted, "the sport literature contains few analyses in which Black women are subjects of study," while, more broadly, there have been few studies of the interconnectedness of race, class, sexuality, and gender in the sport media. Thus, there is a need for research examining the "racialized construction of gender and sexuality" that frames women of color as the "Other" "in order to reinforce white women as the hegemonic standard" (Douglas, 2002, para. 3.1; see also Green, 1993). This notion of White athletes as the hegemonic standard should also be extended to the construction of Whiteness more generally, as there has been a tendency in the analysis of race and sport in the sport media to "address race as if it is only relevant to those perceived to be raced subjects" (Douglas, 2002, para. 8.1). While studies such as Altimore's (1999), Kusz's (2001a, 2001b, 2001c), and Long and Hylton's (2002) recognized how part of the ideological power of Whiteness is its status as the standard by which difference is identified (see Hall, 1985), there is nonetheless a need for further analysis of the way in which "whiteness" informs dominant racial discourse (Douglas, 2002, para. 8.1).

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