

****Media and racial stereotypes****

Article. Campbell, P.I., Bebb, L. (2022). 'He is like a Gazelle (when he runs)' (re)constructing race and nation in match-day commentary at the men's 2018 FIFA World Cup, *Sport in Society*, 25(1), 144-162.

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Aim. This paper explores how television commentary at the 2018 men's FIFA World Cup reproduced racialized and national stereotypes in football. It focuses on how praise differed across players of different visible racial backgrounds (Black, White, Mixed race). And how these narratives intersected with national belonging. The aim was to assess whether the framing of positive praise commentary differed for players who were visibly Black, White, or Mixed race. The paper evaluates whether stereotypes around Black physicality and White intelligence continue to shape football commentary.

Methods. 45 hours of TV coverage at the 2018 FIFA World Cup from 20 matches that were broadcasted on the BBC and ITV in the UK were used for a verbal content analysis. A total of 1009 praise (positive) comments were coded into 65 different themes and then classified into five categories: (1) natural abilities, (2) learned abilities, (3) cognitive abilities, (4) physical attributes, and (5) character.

Key findings.

- White players received the highest number of positive comments (448) compared to visibly Black players (281) and Mixed-race players (64). White players were mostly praised for learned skills, while Black and Mixed-race players were predominantly praised for physicality, such as speed or power.
- The framing of Mixed-race players was similar to that of Black players.
- Narratives varied by nationality. Black and Mixed-race French players were predominantly praised for physicality but rarely for cognition or character. Eastern European (White) players were framed more in terms of character, strength, and power. White players in England were praised for cognition and learned skills, while Black players were praised for pace and power.
- While the White player Harry Kane was praised for intelligence and awareness, the Black player Romelu Lukaku was predominantly praised for physicality and power, rather than clearly displayed intelligence. The authors mention how such contradicting commentary depicts how similar performances are read through racial lenses.
- There were a few exceptions. Some outstanding Black players like Vincent Kompany disrupted these patterns. He was praised for leadership and character beyond physical attributes.

Summarizing, one can say the football media commentary was not racially neutral. It reproduced dominant discourses of race and nation. Further, the study showed how racism operates through subtle praise frames rather than obvious criticism.