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**A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF REPORTERS' COVERAGE OF TRACK AND  
FIELD ATHLETES IN SPORTS ILLUSTRATED PRIOR TO,  
DURING AND AFTER THE SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES OF  
1968 AND 1988**

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**DANIEL RAYMOND MARTENS**

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1968 AND 1988

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An Abstract  
Presented to the  
Graduate and Research Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Daniel Raymond Martens  
May 1992



## ABSTRACT

This study looked at the type of coverage track and field athletes received from the reporters of Sports Illustrated in the years 1968 and 1988. The study was particularly concerned with the reporting treatment that African-American track and field athletes have received, and if that treatment had increased over the 20 years of the study.

This study discerned that African-American track and field athletes have seen an increase in the amount of positive statements written about them over a 20 year period in the pages of Sports Illustrated. The number of positive statements written about African-American track and field athletes rose from 3% of all statements written about them in 1968 to 16% in 1988. African-American track and field athletes have also seen an increase in the amount of coverage received over the same 20 years. In 1968, 33 statements were made referring to African-American track and field athletes in the pages of Sports Illustrated. Twenty years later the number of statements rose to 336, thus showing an increase in coverage of over 10 times over the 20 year period.

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To the Graduate and Research Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Daniel Raymond Martens entitled "A content analysis of reporters' coverage of track and field athletes in Sports Illustrated prior to, during and after the Summer Olympic games of 1968 and 1988." I have examined the final copy of this paper for form and content, and I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, with a major in Speech, Communication and Theatre.

Major Professor

We have read this  
thesis and recommend  
its acceptance:

Second Committee Member

Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Graduate  
and Research Council:

Dean of the Graduate School

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

This study is designed to determine, through a content analysis, whether Sports Illustrated's coverage of African American track and field athletes differed from the Olympic year of 1968 to the Olympic year of 1988. The two years used in the study were chosen for two reasons. First, by 1968 the legal struggle for African Americans in their quest for equality with European-Americans had largely been won. However, the day-to-day struggle that African-Americans faced to become equal continued, and the reality of life in many cities of our country failed to follow the legal civil rights victories. This period saw many racial riots in cities such as Los Angeles and Detroit (Paletz and Dunn, 1969). The civil rights push began on December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, when Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of a 36-seat bus and was arrested. She was freed on bail and ultimately went to court and paid a ten-dollar fine for her actions. This incident led to a boycott of the bus line in Montgomery by African-American workers, spearheaded by Martin Luther King, Jr. (Staff, 1965). The death of Dr. King in 1968 marked the end of this phase of the civil rights struggle.

African-American athletes were also protesting at this time, but for a different cause. They were up in arms over

the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) decision to allow South Africa back into the Summer Games in Mexico City. South Africa had been banned from the games because of apartheid in 1964. They were reinstated into the games after they met the criteria for selection of athletes for the Olympics. This action by the IOC sent a message to many African-American athletes that they must stand up against the IOC for letting South Africa back into the games (Furlong, 1968).

Many African-American athletes boycotted the 1968 Summer Games. Those who chose to participate in the games were not modest in their views of the events surrounding South Africa. Two athletes who displayed their feelings and were stripped of their Olympic medals were Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Smith and Carlos raised clinched fists into the air while the Star-Spangled Banner was played, signifying their views of the events taking place in the world. The IOC stripped them of their medals immediately (Underwood, 1968).

The controversy that surrounded the display of expression by Smith and Carlos took away a lot of the glory that was achieved by many other African-American athletes. Bob Beamon's world record jump was the most notable accomplishment that was put aside by the Smith/Carlos incident. Beamon jumped over 29 feet in the long-jump to shatter the



old world record, not by inches, but by feet (Underwood, 1968).

The second reason these two eras were chosen is because of the enormous popularity our African-American track and field Olympic athletes achieved following the 1988 Olympics. These Olympic athletes made public appearances and cashed in on their Olympic success (Moore, 1989).

This study will test whether a major sports magazine has practiced a double standard in reporting about African-American and European-American athletes, and if it has, whether the difference in treatment has decreased over time.

Specific hypotheses to be tested through this content analysis are as follows:

1. More racial identification of African American track and field athletes will occur in 1968 than in 1988.
2. In 1968 more mentions of the boycott and attitudes of the boycott will be made than mentions of abilities or achievements of African American track and field athletes.
3. In 1988 there will be more positive statements made about African American track and field athletes than in 1968.
4. In both years more negative statements will be made about African American track and field athletes than about European-American track and field athletes.

This thesis is centered around the image of African-American athletes in the mass media. A comparative study will be done spanning the 20 years that mark two different eras for African Americans in the United States. A comparison will be drawn using the type of coverage African-American track and field athletes received in Sports Illustrated in the Summer Olympics of 1968 in Mexico City and 1988 in Seoul.

The literature review will discuss what past researchers have found on the coverage of minorities by the mass media, particularly the coverage African-Americans have received.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

Past studies of mass media coverage of African-Americans have found the percentage of African-Americans in advertisements to be disproportionately low to the overall African-American population (Learner, 1970). Reid and Vanden Bergh (1980) found that, in 1969, African-Americans appeared in the ads of four popular magazines .35% of the time. Census data from the same year estimate the percentage of African-Americans in the United States at 11.20% (Lerner, 1970). Twenty years later in an analysis of television commercials, Riffe, Goldson, Saxton, and Yu (1989) found that the numbers of African-Americans shown in advertising had increased. They report that one in three commercials aired during children's programs on Saturday mornings had at least one non-European-American.

In the area of television programming, Metabane (1988) found that African-Americans were either viewed in all African-American settings or alone in all European-American settings. Magazines showed similar tendencies when Thibodeau (1989) found that less than 1% of cartoons published during the 42 years studied in the New Yorker had African-Americans in them.



This chapter will take a closer look at what had been said by past researchers who wrote about advertising in magazines and television, programming in television, and illustrations and photographs in magazines. This review of the literature will be organized to look at the three major areas listed above.

### Magazine and Television Advertising

Reid and Vanden Bergh (1980) concluded that African-Americans were not only under-represented in advertisements, but were also cast in minor roles. In 1969 Cox studied the visibility of African-Americans in advertisement. He concluded that nearly 30% of all African-Americans in the advertisements studied had occupations that were below skilled labor. In comparison, European-Americans were shown as skilled laborers over 97% of the time during the same time frame. Unskilled labor included maids, servants, waiters, farmers, and island laborers, while skilled labor included occupations in sports, entertainment, professional work, and students.

As stated earlier, in 1969 African-Americans appeared in the ads of four popular magazines only 0.35% of the time (Reid & Vanden Bergh, 1980). Fourteen years later Soley (1983) looked at the percentage of readership of African-Americans and the percentage of visibility in ads by African-Americans. Soley referred to the Simmons Marketing Research Bureau who found that 13.2% of Sports

Illustrated's readers were African-American, but only 2.3% of the ads had African-American models in them. Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News had similar percentages with total readership of African-Americans and percentage of African-Americans in the ads.

Colfax and Sternberg (1972) conducted a study looking at the number of African-Americans in magazine advertisements. They found that 4% of the advertising pages studied had African-Americans appearing in them, while slightly over 3% of the over 21,000 people appearing in the ads were African-American.

Cox (1969) studied the visibility of African-Americans in magazine advertisements and concluded that the percentage of African-Americans in advertisements was on the rise. He stated that in 1950, 0.57% of all identifiable adults appearing in the ads were African-American. By 1967, this figure had increased to over 2% of identifiable adults appearing in advertisements.

Colfax and Sternberg (1972) put African-Americans in categories that were typically used by the mass media. These categories included the Ad Black as Celebrity: this is where the magazines used a highly visible celebrity to sell a product. The Token Ad-Black: African-Americans were put in the advertisement, but not associated with the product. The Black Image as Child-Image: Colfax and Sternberg (1989) argued that this form of advertisement used

children because they are less threatening to European-America.

Zinkhan, Cox, and Hong (1986) examined five popular magazines to determine the percentages of African-Americans in those magazines and the work that they performed in the ads. Nearly 4% of the ads contained an African-American actor. These numbers show an increase in the visibility of African-Americans in magazine advertisements.

Zinkhan et al. (1986) concluded that African-American images and the roles that African-Americans play in advertising are slowly changing. In the 1983-84 period, African-American models are almost three times more likely than European-American models to be portrayed as sports figures. Sentman (1983) also concluded that in the pages of Life magazine, African-Americans were portrayed as working professionals and sports figures more than they had in years prior.

Riffe, et al. (1989) also found the trend of making African-Americans more visible in commercials on television. Saturday morning children's programs were studied to determine the visibility of African-Americans in commercials. They found African-Americans appearing in one out of three commercials aired during this time slot. African-Americans made up 6% of the total human and animated non-European-American characters in these ads. This was increased considerably from the 0.35% of African-Americans in



magazine advertisements that Reid and Vanden Bergh (1980) found in 1969. It is a far cry from the 60% of the total human and animated characters that European-Americans made up, but it is nearly a 20 fold increase over what Reid and Vanden Bergh (1980) had found in 1969.

Riffe et al. (1989) found that 96% of the total number of minorities shown in commercials on Saturday mornings were under adult age (presumably 18 years old). This may coincide with Colfax and Sternberg's (1972) argument that The Black Image as Child-Image was used in the advertisements because they were seen as less threatening by European-Americans or children may have been used because the ads were aimed at children.

Humphrey and Schuman (1984) found that African-Americans were being portrayed more often in advertisements than they had been in the 30 years prior. They did find a decline in the percentage of African-Americans in advertisements from 1980 to 1981. They viewed this down turn as a fall-out from the election of Ronald Reagan in November 1980. They felt that the advertisers may have perceived an economic recession, causing advertisers to reduce their use of African-Americans in advertisements. Figures in 1982 showed an increase in the use of African-Americans in advertisements. This may indicate that advertisers are sensitive to political and economic trends (Humphrey & Schuman, 1984).

Soley (1983) stated "...advertising professionals are businessmen first and moralists second. If it is believed that the presence of African-American models in advertisements decreases the effectiveness of advertising messages, only token numbers of African-American models will be used" (p. 690). Colfax and Sternberg (1972) stated in their study that the mass circulation magazine advertising reflects, if not precisely and not always accurately, the values of European-America, as it conveys racial stereotypes, subtle and probably unintentional, to tens of millions of predominantly European-American readers and consumers. And as such it is part and parcel of the times.

#### Magazine Illustrations and Photographs

The visibility of African-Americans and European-Americans in magazine photographs has been studied in recent years. Stempel's comparison of 1960 and 1970 magazines, as reported by Ortizano, showed that African-Americans had proportionately higher representation in editorial content than in advertisements. Racially mixed pictures appeared more often in editorial content in Stempel's findings than in advertisements (Ortizano, 1989).

Ortizano (1989) conducted a study comparing the presence of African-American-only, European-American-only, and racially mixed photographs in the editorial and advertising content of six magazines. Ortizano found that magazines tended to under-represent one race or the other. The

African-American magazines showed advertising photographs of only African-Americans on the average 87% of the time. The numbers were similar in photographs of editorial content in African-American magazines. The magazines that appeal to European-American readers had a higher percentage of European-American-only photographs in advertisements than their African-American magazine counterparts. The percentages were nearly the same for photographs in editorial content.

Thibodeau (1989) found a decreasing number of times African-Americans appeared in the New Yorker's cartoons over a 42-year period. One African-American cartoon character, in the 42 years studied, was a main character in the magazine. Race-related humor dominated the cartoons from 1966 through 1975, although 85% of these occurred prior to 1971. Only one cartoon out of 51 depicted a African-American in a racial theme during the period from 1976 through 1987. Fewer than 1% of cartoons published in the New Yorker during the 42 years had African-Americans in them.

African-Americans appearing in the cartoons of the New Yorker were often shown as African slaves or tribesmen. Many times African-Americans appeared as faces in a crowd such as student protesters, summer campers or in subway scenes. Thibodeau (1989) did find that the mid to late 1970s and early 1980s showed African-Americans as professional athletes, doctors, and lawyers.



The two studies by Ortizano (1989) and Thibodeau (1989) showed that African-Americans have not been shown in magazine cartoons and in photographs in proportion to their overall population. Thibodeau (1989) did find that in the last 15 years the New Yorker has shown African-Americans in more prestigious roles, but the frequency that African-Americans have been seen decreased in the past 40 years.

### Programming in Television

African-Americans involved in television programming is another area where the scales of balance are off. Lemon (1977) found that African-Americans were rarely portrayed in working situations in children's programs.

Lemon (1977) also studied the effects of African-Americans on prime time television. She found that African-Americans have stronger portrayals than European-Americans in situation comedies, but African-Americans are portrayed unfavorably in crime dramas. The situation comedies showed African-Americans dominating European-Americans more often. The trend was reversed though, in crime dramas. Here, European-Americans were dominant over African-Americans in 41% of the inter-race interactions.

Atkin, Greenberg, and McDermott (1983) conducted a study on television and race role socialization. They pointed out that the majority of African-Americans that were shown on television were in a small number of shows. In the all-African-American shows actors tended to be more



stereotyped, lower in social status, and have more problems than integrated shows. Matabane (1988) noted that African-American characters tended to be cast in all-African-American settings or alone in all-European-American settings. The African-American settings tended to be low income, with few socially productive persons who care about social problems. The lone African-American in the all-European-American settings tended to be upscale and productive. Slang was used, in general, by African-Americans in the all African-American settings by the low income characters. A final trait Metabane found in his 1988 study was the rarity of racism portrayed or even discussed in the shows. Asante (1976) pointed out in his study that in recent years, commercial television has tried to correct the mistakes it had made in years past with its programming choices. He mentioned that the effort has reduced some of the racism in television.

Rainville and McCormick (1977) studied the extent of covert racial prejudice in professional football announcer's speech during actual broadcasts of games. They concluded that European-American players had better things said about them than did African-American players. African-American players received significantly more references to past nonprofessional achievement, but in a negative way. For example: academic difficulties kept Johnson from achieving his full potential in college. European-American

players received more positive special focus from the announcers and more sympathy whereas African-Americans received more negative speculation (Rainville & McCormick, 1977).

Research that has been done in the past on mass media coverage of African-Americans has centered around the portrayal of African-Americans in magazine and television advertising, television dramas and situational comedies, and magazine photos and cartoons. Relatively little research has been done looking at newspapers or at news or sports content in any of the mass media. However, the body of literature that has built up in the areas of advertising, programming, and illustrations does point out several general trends:

1. African-Americans are under-represented in all media (Reid & Vanden Bergh, 1980; Soley, 1983; Colfax & Sternberg, 1972; Thibodeau, 1989)
2. African-Americans have been seen more often in recent years in the media (Compare Reid & Vanden Bergh, 1980; Colfax & Sternberg, 1972; with Riffe et al., 1989; Zinkhan et al., 1986).
3. Occupations of African-Americans have increased in prestige in advertising in recent years (Sentman, 1983, Zinkhan et al., 1986).

The following pages will show how the study was conducted in the methodology chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

Sports Illustrated was chosen for analysis of American track and field athletes for several reasons. It is the most comprehensive magazine when it comes to coverage of sporting events. Sports Illustrated is the most widely read, general sports magazine today with over 2.5 million subscribers. Two other magazines were considered for the study, The Sporting News and Sport. Neither has close to the readership that Sports Illustrated has. The Sporting News has roughly three-quarters of a million subscribers weekly, while Sport has a shade over 900,000 subscribers (B. Katz & L.S. Katz, 1986). Sport is a monthly magazine, thus it has fewer articles to review than Sports Illustrated. The final reason that Sports Illustrated was used in this study was availability. The Sporting News was not in Austin Peay's library, and the issues of Sport did not go back to 1968. Sports Illustrated was readily available for study while the other two magazines were not.

Seven issues of Sports Illustrated were coded from 1968 and eight issues from 1988 to help determine whether the hypotheses were correct. The issues that were studied from 1968 included September 23, September 30, October 14,



October 21, October 28, November 4, and November 11. The issues that were studied from 1988 were August 1, August 22, August 29, September 12, September 26, October 3, and October 10. There were two issues of Sports Illustrated published on September 12, 1988. One issue was the regular weekly issue, while the other was a special Olympic issue. Both issues were used in the study because both issues had articles on American track and field athletes.

While reviewing the issues, only articles were used. Letters to the editor were ruled out as were any other opinion pages that appeared in the magazine. Magazine photos and cut lines were also not used in the study. This was done to get a better idea of what the reporters were saying about the athletes. A concern was not what the average American had to say about the track and field athletes in the letter to the editor column. Rather, this study was concerned with what the reporters had to say. The reporters were covering the athletes during their competitions and were writing about the track and field athletes. They would have a professional view of the athletes, contrary to what the average American might think about the athletes.

While reviewing the issues for the study, the first thing that was done was to write down the number of pages in the issue and the number of articles contained in the issue. The pages that contained letters to the editor or

opinion columns were ignored. The first page of the first article appearing in each issue was used as the starting point for counting pages. The number of articles was determined by looking at the table of contents at the front of the magazine and counting the articles appearing in that table.

While reviewing the articles, the first thing done was to record the name of each American track and field athlete mentioned. There was not a problem determining whether the athlete was American or not. The articles made clear mention of the nationality of the athlete.

Next, the race of the subject was written down, if the article had mentioned or made a reference to race. Some words or phrases looked for in the articles that might signify racial identification included black, Negro, Afro-American, African-American, black American, white, or Caucasian. If there was not a clear indication of the athlete's race, then it was coded as "do not know." Pictures and cut lines were not used to determine that race of the subject in this category. The only way used to determine the race of the athlete was through the writings of the reporters.

Next, it was determined whether the reporter wrote about the subject in the articles in a way that was positive, negative or neutral. Situations that showed the athletes in a positive light included mentioning the

athletes going to college or have gone to college in the past, working in the community with children or any other type of community service organization, endorsing a product, spending time with their family, or any other type of leisure activity away from their competition.

Words or phrases that showed the athletes in a negative light included identification of the neighborhood the athletes grew up in such as slum, ghetto or inner city. Other words or phrases that showed the athletes in a negative light included trouble that the athletes had with academics in high school or college, legal difficulties including involvement in crime or drugs, or being raised in a broken home.

The writings of the reporter concerning the athlete was coded neutral if the statements written did not fall into either of the categories listed above. The reportings of an athlete were coded neutral if a world or American record was broken. It is a positive accomplishment in their lives, but it only is a recording of Olympic facts. It is not something that was said about them by a reporter, or it is not a way to spend leisure time. That is why a world or American record performance was coded as neutral.

Next, it was determined whether the paragraph was positive, negative, or neutral. Positive and negative paragraphs were determined by the same guidelines that were used in determining the view of the subject. This was to



determine whether there was a difference in the overall coverage of the athletes in the two years studied.

Oftentimes in the study, whole paragraphs made mention of foreign athletes. When this occurred the paragraph was coded neutral.

Many world and American records were broken by the American track and field athletes in the time period covered. When these records were reported, they were coded as positive paragraphs. They were not, however, automatically coded as positive statements about the athletes. In order for the statement to be coded positive, it had to meet the criteria listed earlier.

Oftentimes in this research, whole paragraphs were found that quoted the athletes saying something, or someone saying something about the athletes from other countries. These paragraphs were coded as neutral.

If the paragraph mentioned only the race or event in which the athlete was competing, then the paragraph was coded neutral. In this instance the view of the athlete was also coded as neutral. This was because the paragraph mentioned only the details of the race and not anything about the athletes. In other words, there was no clear view of the athlete that the author of the article was giving in this situation.

If positive mentions and negative mentions about American track and field athletes were found in the same

paragraph, the paragraphs were coded as both positive and negative.

When foreign athletes were mentioned along with American athletes in an article, the view of the foreign athletes by the reporter was not written down. If a whole paragraph mentioned other sports, then it was coded as neutral. If it mentioned American track and field athletes in the same paragraph, then it could have been coded as positive, negative, or neutral. The only concern of this study was that of American track and field athletes.

The final step that was done in this study was to go back to the coding sheet and write down the race of each athlete mentioned. This would later be used to test hypotheses three and four.

The next chapter will deal with the results obtained from the study of Sports Illustrated.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results of Study

This study examined 15 issues of Sports Illustrated, seven from 1968 and eight from 1988. The difference in number reflects the special Olympic issue published on September 12, 1988.

There was a difference between the two years used in the study in the number of pages used for reporting on athletic events and the number of articles appearing in those issues. Table 1 shows the difference between 1968 and 1988.

The total number of articles that appeared in 1968 was 51, for an average of seven per issue. The total number in 1988 was 89 for an average of 11 per issue; this is 38 more articles between 1968 and 1988 for an average of four more per issue. The average difference of 32 pages and four articles per issue will help explain the larger numbers found later in this chapter in the study of 1988 than those found in 1968 (see Table 1).

In 1968 the seven issues studied contained 436 pages of copy for an average of 62 pages per issue. Twenty years later, there were 751 pages of copy devoted to the eight issues for an average of 94 pages per issue.



Table 1

Articles and Pages in Sports Illustrated in 1968 and 1988  
Which Were Devoted to American Track and Field Athletes by  
Number and Mean Average.

Year	1968	1988
Number of articles for the year	51	89
Average number of articles per issue used in study	7	11
Number of pages for the year	436	751
Average number of pages per issue used in study	62	94

From the 15 issues studied over the two-year period, 21 articles of Sports Illustrated were coded. Six articles were taken from the 1968 issues, while 15 articles were taken from the 1988 issues. These data show that in 1988 American track and field athletes were written about more than twice as often as Olympic track and field athletes in 1968 (see Table 2).

In 1968 there were 124 separate identifications of athletes in the articles. As Table 3 shows, there were four identifications that signified the athletes as being European-American or African-American. Using the guidelines set in Chapter 3, this researcher was able to determine that three of the athletes were African-American and one was European-American. These two categories comprised only 3% of the athletes mentioned. The other 120

athletes (97%) were not identifiable by the writing style used by the reporters.

Table 2

Number of Articles from Sports Illustrated Used to Study American Track and Field Athletes by Number and Percentage.

Year	Number of Articles Used in Study	Percentage
1968	6	35
1988	15	65
Total	21	100

The year 1988 saw nearly three times as many athletes mentioned in the nine issues studied. Interestingly enough, race could not be determined in any of the 368 subjects mentioned by the various authors.

The data collected in this area, therefore, support the first hypothesis that stated more racial identifications of African American athletes would occur in 1968 than in 1988. The numbers are quite small and really do not make a strong statement. Still, they do support this particular hypothesis (see Table 3).

Before discussing the last three hypotheses, it might be helpful to look at the overall coverage of American track and field athletes in the two years of the study. The results that they presented are interesting.

The results that they presented are interesting.

Table 3

Total Number of American Track and Field Athletes  
Identifiable by Race in the Writings of the Reporters of  
Sports Illustrated by Number and Percentage.

Race of Athlete	Number of Identifiable Subjects	Percentage
1968		
Identified as black	3	2
Identified as white	1	1
Not stated in articles	120	97
Total	124	100
1988		
Identified as black	0	0
Identified as white	0	0
Not stated in articles	368	100
Total	368	100

As Table 4 points out, an examination of the wording that reporters used in the articles showed a large difference in terms of positive statements made about the track and field athlete. The difference between 1968 and 1988 is



this can be attributed in part to more articles and more pages devoted to stories in 1988.

Table 4

Total Number of Positive, Neutral, and Negative Statements of American Track and Field Athletes Written by the Reporters of Sports Illustrated in 1968 and 1988 by Number and Percentage.

Type of Statements Written by Reporters on Athletes	Total Number of Statements	Percentage
	1968	
Positive	11	9
Neutral	106	85
Negative	7	6
Total	124	100
	1988	
Positive	55	15
Neutral	308	83
Negative	5	1
Total	368	99

The number of positive and negative statements in 1968 was similar with 11 positive statements and seven negative statements written by the reporters. These two numbers added together made up only 15% of the total number of statements coded in 1968. The final 85% of the statements fell into the neutral category.

of statements coded in 1968. The final 85% of the statements fell into the neutral category.

There were five times as many positive statements coded in 1988 than were coded in 1968. The percentage of total statements for each year is comparable with 9% being positive in 1968 and 15% in 1988. In 1988 there were only five negative statements on the subjects coded in the issues. This was 1% of the total statements coded. This percentage is six times lower than was seen in 1968. The raw numbers show only two more negative statements in 1968 than was seen 20 years later.

The total number of neutral statements coded in 1988 was 308, which was quite a bit higher than the total number of neutral statements seen in 1968. The percentages though are quite similar. In 1988, 83% of the statements on the subjects reviewed were coded neutral, while in 1968, 85% of the subjects seen were coded neutral (see Table 4).

Table 5 shows that when the neutral statements are removed from the findings that the statistics tell a much stronger story. In 1968 the positive statements accounted for 61% of the total statements. Negative statements accounted for the remaining 39% of the statements. In 1988 the positive numbers jumped tremendously, as 92% of the statements were positive, while the remaining 8% of the statements were negative. This shows that there was an increase of 29% in positive statements written by the

reporters of Sports Illustrated on American track and field athletes over the 20 year period (see Table 5).

Table 5

Positive and Negative Statements Written by the Reporters of Sports Illustrated on American Track and Field Athletes in 1968 and 1988 by Number and Percentage.

Type of Statements Written by Reporters on Athletes	Raw Numbers	Percentage
1968		
Positive	11	61
Negative	7	39
Total	18	100
1988		
Positive	55	92
Negative	5	8
Total	60	100

Table 6 looks at the number of paragraphs dealing with the African American boycott of the 1968 games, compared with the number of positive statements made about individual African American track and field athletes. From this table, one can see that hypothesis two was not supported. Mentions of individual achievements outnumbered mentions of the boycott by 10 to one (see Table 6).



Table 6

Paragraphs Dealing with the Boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games by African American Track and Field Athletes and Positive Paragraphs Written About African American Track and Field Athletes by Number and Percentage.

	Number	Percentage
Paragraphs dealing with the boycott	2	9
Paragraphs dealing with positive achievements of individual African-Americans	21	91
Total statements on the boycott or achievements	23	100

Table 7 looks at the data collected on the total number of positive, neutral, and negative paragraphs. It can be determined that there were more neutral paragraphs coded in both years (371) than positive and negative paragraphs combined (267). Once again this can be attributed to the fact that 1988 issues had more articles devoted to American track and field athletes than 1968 issues.

In 1968 there was a total of 166 paragraphs that were coded. Following the guides set in Chapter 3 for positive, negative, and neutral paragraphs, 21 paragraphs were coded as positive and 21 as negative. This made up roughly one-quarter of the total number of paragraphs written in 1968 on the African American track and field athletes. The final 124 paragraphs (74%) in 1968 were coded as neutral.

In 1988 there were 474 paragraphs contained in the articles reviewed. The issues in 1988 had 180 positive paragraphs written which comprised 38% of the total paragraphs. There were over eight times more positive paragraphs coded in 1988 than were coded in 1968. In terms of total percentage of positive paragraphs in the years coded, 1988 had three times as many positive paragraphs than 1968 had.

The issues of 1988 had 45 total paragraphs (9%) that were coded as negative. This is twice as many negative paragraphs than were found in 1968. The percentage, though, is lower in 1988 than it was in 1968. Both of the percentages are similar and do not show a big difference as was seen in the number of positive and neutral paragraphs (see Table 7).

When the neutral statements are removed from Table 7, a stronger picture of the positive and negative paragraphs from both years is painted. In 1988, 80% of the paragraphs were positive, while in 1968, 49% of the paragraphs were positive. Table 8 highlights this fact in 1988 much stronger than it does in 1968, especially stronger than which was shown in Table 7. Negative paragraphs really show a large gap once the neutral paragraphs are removed. A total of 49% of the paragraphs were coded negative in 1968 to only 20% in 1988. This

nearly two and one-half times increase between the two years shows a clearer difference in terms of coverage between the two years of study.

Table 7

Positive, Neutral and Negative Paragraphs Written About African American Track and Field Athletes by the Reporters of Sports Illustrated in 1968 and 1988 by Number and Percentage.

How Paragraph was Coded	Total Number of Coded Paragraphs	Percentage of Coded Paragraphs
1968		
Positive	21	13
Neutral	124	73
Negative	21	13
Total	168	100
1988		
Positive	180	38
Neutral	249	53
Negative	45	9
Total	474	100



Table 8  
Positive, Negative and Boycott Paragraphs Written by  
Reporters of Sports Illustrated in 1968 and 1988 by  
Number and Percentage.

How Paragraph was Coded	Total Number of Coded Paragraphs	Percentage of Coded Paragraphs
1968		
Positive	21	49
Negative	21	49
Boycott	2	1
Total	44	99
1988		
Positive	180	80
Negative	45	20
Boycott	0	0
Total	225	100

Table 9 points out that the issues of 1968 show a much smaller number of mentions of African-American track and field athletes (33) than was seen for European-Americans (90). Of those African-Americans mentioned in the articles, over three-quarters had a neutral statement written about them. Twenty-one percent of the mentions were negative and only one mention or 3% was positive.

Table 9

A Comparison of African-American and European-American Track and Field Athletes and the Type of Statements Made About the Athletes as Written by the Reporters of Sports Illustrated in 1968 and 1988 by Number and Percentage.

Type of Statements	1968		1988	
	Total Number	Percentage	Total Number	Percentage
<u>Black</u>				
Positive	1	3	53	16
Neutral	26	76	278	83
Negative	7	21	5	1
Totals	33	100	336	100
<u>White</u>				
Positive	10	11	3	11
Neutral	80	89	25	89
Negative	0	0	0	0
Totals	90	100	28	100

European-American track and field athletes saw a greater number of positive mentions about them and also a greater number of neutral mentions. On ten occasions European-American track and field athletes were shown positively, while there were no mentions at all of negative

statements. Neutral statements made up 89% of the total statements of the athletes.

Looking at 1988, the change in the statements made about African-American track and field athletes was tremendous. This year saw over ten times more mentions of the African-American athlete than were written in 1968. The numbers increased from 33 statements in 1968 to 336 in 1988. Of the 336 different statements about African-American track and field athletes in 1988, the biggest increase in terms of raw numbers and percentage between the two years was seen in the positive statements category. A total of 53 statements about African-American athletes were positive. This figure shows an increase in percentage of over 500 percent from 1968 to 1988. The total number of negative statements from 1988 (5) was down from 1968 (7). These numbers, though do not show the great drop in percentage from one year to the next. In 1968 21% of the written views were negative, while in 1988 only 1% of the views were negative. The neutral views stayed relatively close. The increase in 1988 was only seven percentage points higher than was seen in 1968.

European-American track and field athletes seen in the study had the exact percentages from 1968 to 1988. The number of statements though, decreased considerably from the two years. A total of 90 statements was made in 1968, but only 28 were made in 1988. Three of those statements



were positive (11%), while the remaining 25 statements were neutral (89%). Once again in 1988, as was the case in 1968, there were no negative statements about the European-American track and field athletes.

In 1988 the African-American track and field athlete was seen in 87% of all the statements on track and field athletes. This is a reversal from 1968 where only 24% of the statements were about African-American athletes. The figures from 1988 also show great strides for African-Americans in positive coverage. The increase was over five times what was seen in 1968.

The final two hypotheses laid out in Chapter 1 appear to be supported by the data illustrated in Table 9. The third hypothesis said there would be more positive statements of African American track and field athletes in 1988 than in 1968. This is supported in Table 9, as 53 positive statements were made in 1988 about African American track and field athletes while one positive statement was made in 1968.

Table 10 was actually used to test this hypothesis. When a chi-square goodness of fit test was run on the top portion of Table 10 comparing the treatment of African-American athletes in 1968 and 1988, the table yielded a chi-square of 28.4. This number is significant at a probability level of less than .001. Principally contributing to this chi-square were the differences in the number of

negative statements from 1968 to 1988. They decreased significantly in 1988. Thus hypothesis three was supported.

Table 10

The Positive and Negative Statements Made About American Track and Field Athletes as Written by the Reporters of Sports Illustrated in 1968 and 1988 by Number and Percentage.

Type of Statements	1968		1988	
	Total Number	Percentage	Total Number	Percentage
African-American				
Positive	1	12	53	91
Negative	7	88	5	9
Totals	18	100	58	100
European-American				
Positive	10	100	3	100
Negative	0	0	0	0
Totals	10	100	3	100

The fourth hypothesis supported by data in Table 9 said that more negative statements in both years studied would be made about African American athletes than were made about European-American track and field athletes. A total of 12 negative statements were made in both years

studied about African-American athletes, while no negative statements were made about European-American athletes. When a chi-square is run of these numbers, one finds that significantly more negative statements were made about African-American athletes in the two years than about European-American athletes ( $\chi^2=12$ ;  $p<.001$ ). Thus hypothesis four was supported (see Table 9). When the neutral views were removed from Table 9, the figures once again were stronger. Twelve percent of the statements seen in 1968 about African-American athletes were positive while the other 88% were negative. This is much stronger than Table 9 pointed out with 3% of the statements on African-American subjects positive and 21% of the statements negative. Table 10 shows a jump of percentage in the positive statements of four times of what they were when the neutral statements were included in Table 9. The same is also true with the negative once the neutral statements are removed. European-Americans in 1968 saw their percentage of positive statements jump from 11% positive in Table 9 to 100% positive in Table 10. The same percentage holds true in 1988 as all judgmental views were positive.

Table 10 also points out in 1988 that the percentage of positive and negative views are increased once the neutral statements are removed. A total of 91% of the views in Table 10 are positive, while 9% are negative. These are large increases over what Table 9 showed when the



neutral statements were included (see Table 10). The data collected in this chapter help to support hypotheses one, three, and four, while the data did not support hypothesis two. The data show that African-Americans received better coverage in 1988 than was seen in 1968 from the reporters of Sports Illustrated.

The final chapter will discuss whether the hypotheses stated in Chapter 1 were supported or not supported.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

Three of the hypotheses that were set down in Chapter 1 have been supported by the data collected. A fourth hypothesis was not supported by the data collected.

The first hypothesis proposed that more racial identifications of African-American track and field athletes would occur in 1968 than in 1988. Study data showed three black identifications occurring in 1968, while in 1988 there were no racial identifications. It is interesting to note that only four racial identifications occurred in 1968. Given all of the social unrest going on in the country during the time of the 1968 Summer games, this researcher believed that more identifications of race would occur. Subjects that were identifiable by race through the writings of reporters of Sports Illustrated comprised 3% of the total number of subjects in 1968 and none of the subjects in 1988.

The second supported hypothesis stated that the data collected would indicate that more positive statements would be made in 1988 about African-American track and field athletes than were made in 1968. In Table 9, the increase of positive statements made by Sports Illustrated writers can be seen from the data collected in 1988, over

what was collected in 1968. A total of 53 positive statements were made about African-American track and field athletes in 1988, while only one positive statement was made in 1968 about African-American track and field athletes.

The increase in positive statements from 1968 to 1988 may have occurred because of the popularity of many African-American track and field athletes. The popularity that athletes such as Florence Griffith Joyner, Jackie Joyner Kersey, and Carl Lewis brought with them to the 1988 Olympic games may have been a cause of increased visibility in the pages of Sports Illustrated. It also may be true that the track and field athletes at the Olympic games in 1988 had a better rapport with the sports fans of America than those track and field athletes from 1968. The increased visibility of African-American track and field athletes in the pages of Sports Illustrated may be connected to the increased visibility in other mass media as the literature review in Chapter 2 suggests.

The increase in positive statements took on a different look in Table 10 when the neutral statements were removed from Table 9. Now in Table 10, 91% of the statements in 1988 were positive. The positive statements percentage also was raised in the 1968 portion of Table 10. It is seen in Table 9 that 12% of the statements are positive. Table 9 showed a difference between the percentages



of positive statements in 1988 to those in 1968 of over five times. Table 10, though, shows an increase of over seven times what was seen in the positive statements category in 1988 from that in 1968.

This researcher believes the low number of positive statements written in 1968 on African-American track and field athletes may have been attributed to the social unrest of the country at the time. The death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the fight for racial equality may have biased the reporters of Sports Illustrated in their views of African-American track and field athletes.

Table 9 shows that European-American track and field athletes saw a decline in the number of positive statements from those seen in 1968 to those seen in 1988. The percentages, however, were identical over the two Olympic years of the study. This would lead one to believe that the content of the articles the reporters wrote concerning European-American track and field athletes did not change from 1968 to 1988 (see Table 9).

The third hypothesis which was supported by the study suggested that more negative statements would be written about African-American track and field athletes in the two Olympic years studied than were made about European-American track and field athletes. Table 9 supports this hypothesis also.

African-American track and field athletes had seven negative statements written about them in 1968 and five negative statements written about them in 1988. European-Americans, on the other hand, did not have a negative statement written about them in the two years studied.

These data showed the number of negative statements about African-American track and field athletes dropped from seven in 1968 to five in 1988. This would appear to be only a small change from one year to the next. However, when the neutral statements were removed from Table 9, the percentage of negative statements took on a different look as indicated in Table 10. The statements coded negative in 1968 were 88% of the total statements coded for that year, while only 9% of the statements were negative in 1988. These data show a great change in the perspective of Sports Illustrated's writers toward African-American track and field athletes from 1968 to 1988 (see Table 10).

The one hypothesis that was not supported by the study data dealt with the boycott of the Olympic games by African-American athletes. The hypothesis stated that more mentions of the boycott and attitudes about the boycott would occur in 1968, than positive mentions of abilities or achievements of African-American track and field athletes in that same year.

Table 6 showed that in only two paragraphs were the boycott, or any attitude about the boycott was mentioned. The number of positive paragraphs for 1968 were 21. The difference in positive and boycott paragraphs did not support this hypothesis (see Tables 6 and 7).

It was believed before this study started that the boycott would have been a focal point in the writings of the reporters of Sports Illustrated during the 1968 Olympic games. Table 6 clearly shows that the boycott was nearly ignored by the reporters.

Once again, this researcher believes that these data collected show a more favorable look at African-American track and field athletes in 1988 than was seen in 1968. The reasons the numbers increased in 1988 from those seen in 1968 are not clearly known. The largest contributor to the increased number may have been the influence of television on the sporting world. Television brought the Olympic games into the households of millions in 1988. This researcher believes that people could identify with American track and field athletes more in the late 1980s than in the late 1960s because television displayed these athletes to more people. The faces were more recognizable in the late 1980s, therefore the athletes were more popular. It is this researcher's opinion that the reporters were writing what the readers of Sports Illustrated wanted to read. Readers wanted to read about the American track and field



athletes and their accomplishments against the world's best track and field athletes. Perhaps the reporters in 1988 were merely conveying the public sentiment about the American track and field athletes in the articles of Sports Illustrated.

These data appear to support the literature review in Chapter 2 showing that African-Americans have seen an increase in the amount of coverage given to them by the mass media. The literature review in Chapter 2 suggested that an increase in coverage was seen in the areas of advertising, illustrations, and photographs, and programming in television from the 1960s to 1980s.

The trend continued in this study, as African-American track and field athletes were written about more often in 1988 than those African-American track and field athletes in 1968 (see Table 9). The trend also showed that negative statements were made less often in 1988 in comparison to 1968 (see Table 9).

The coverage of African-American track and field athletes changed over the 20 year period in this study. If this researcher were to do another study, the statements made about African-American track and field athletes from this summer's Olympic games in Barcelona would be coded. It would be interesting to see if the trend of popularity that was seen in the past, as written by the reporters of

Sports Illustrated, would continue on into these Olympic games. That is something that only time will tell.

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