Public perception and racial stereotypes of black and white quarterbacks

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Just over one in ten NFL quarterbacks are black. A small number considering that 68 percent of all NFL players are black, but it’s a fact that isn’t surprising to CU Boulder researcher Patrick Ferrucci who just published a study on racial stereotypes of black and white quarterbacks and how the public perceives them.

CUT 1 “Prior research shows that white quarterbacks tend to be described as intelligent or good leaders while black quarterbacks tend to be described as physically strong or naturally gifted. (:10) And we were looking to see whether if people actually apply those stereotypes. What we found was, yes, they do depending on their race.” (:18)

Ferrucci did two studies and found that both white and black participants applied stereotypes to NFL quarterbacks. But surprisingly, he says, black participants applied stereotypes to both black and white quarterbacks more strongly, suggesting these attitudes are deeply ingrained.

CUT 2 “Black participants actually stereotyped black quarterbacks more than white participants did and what we think that's because there's a lot of literature that shows that groups that are often stereotyped tend to believe those stereotypes more than other groups. (:16) So we believe that black participants have heard so much about what black quarterbacks are good at and not good at and stereotyped accordingly.” (:25)

Ferrucci explains that a phenomenon known as social identity theory dictates that we think of people similar to us as unique, but we think of people in other groups as homogenous because we do not know them as well making it easier for us to apply stereotypes to people unlike ourselves.

CUT 3 “It's the idea that we put people where we think they fit best based on a lot of stereotypes. So if I were to give you a bunch of photos of black and white football players and I said put them put them in the position you think they would play you might put black players more in terms of skill positions like wide receiver or cornerback because we think of black athletes as more athletic and there's lots of studies that back that up.” (:25)

Ferrucci says the study could have deeper implications beyond the football field. People could be stereotyping many things in life, which could have negative consequences.

CUT 4 “Some of the implications are if people are still applying common stereotypes to professional quarterbacks they're definitely applying common stereotypes in real life which could have a lot more negative implications then just stereotyping quarterbacks and professional football.” (:17)

For more information about Pat Ferrucci’s study, visit [www.colorado.edu/today](http://www.colorado.edu/today) and search quarterback.