

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Deconstructing the Intersectionality of Black Women in Sports Media: A Critical Discourse

Analysis on Sha'Carri Richardson's Response to the 2021 Tokyo Olympic Fallout

By Oluwatamilore Benson

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

BA HONOURS IN COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION, MEDIA, AND FILM

CALGARY, ALBERTA

APRIL 2024

© Oluwatamilore Benson 2024

ABSTRACT

Through an in-depth investigation of Sha'Carri Richardson's self-representation and response to her 2021 Tokyo Olympic suspension, this critical discourse analysis paper explores the intersectionality of Black women in sports media. The aim of this research is to employ Critical Discourse Analysis to dissect the various discourse layers that shape, challenge, and reinforce the identities and experiences of Black women in the closely monitored world of sports media. Using Black cyberfeminism and intersectionality as theoretical frameworks, this study critically analyzes live interviews in which Sha'Carri Richardson discusses the fallout from her Olympic suspension and challenges mainstream discourses by constructing her own narrative and asserting her agency through the use of self-representation. The findings of this study emphasize the significance of agency and self-representation when examining the lived experiences of Black female athletes. Additionally, it sheds light on the difficulties of navigating several intersecting identities, which can lead to different unique forms of oppression. In the context of a larger sociopolitical context, this study emphasizes the significance of self-representation for individuals with various intersecting identities, particularly among Black women in sports media.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and the confidence required to complete this thesis as it challenged me in ways I could have never imagined. I would also like to thank my supervisor Dr Arti Modgill for believing in me and giving me the push and support I needed, not only for this thesis but throughout my entire academic career. I would also like to thank Dr Guglietti and my fellow students in the honours class as I would never have been able to do this without your continued guidance and support. I would like to thank the professors who have agreed to sit and be a part of my Honours committee, your support and feedback is greatly appreciated. More personally I would like to thank my Family specifically my older brother Toni for being the first person to encourage me to do this and always believing I am the smartest person in the room. I would like to thank my friends for constantly listening to me nag about how stressful research is and always reminding me there is light at the end of the tunnel. I specially want to thank my best friend Tofunmi for listening to my constant rants, complaints, praying together and always offering a shoulder for me to cry on whenever I was anxious about this thesis. I would have never done it without you all, Thank you!

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 2: THEORY SECTION	6
Intersectionality.....	8
Black Cyberfeminism.....	11
Self-Representation	13
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW	16
Representational Struggles of Black Athletes.....	17
Layers of Racialized Identity.....	19
The Black Female Athlete.....	22
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY	26
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS	27
TODAY Show Interview.....	27
Struggles with Mental Health and Vulnerability.....	28
Accountability and Public Scrutiny.....	29
Navigating Public Trauma and Media Representations.....	32
CITIUS MAG Interview.....	35
Understanding the industry using Navigational Agency.....	35
Self-empowerment and Support Systems.....	36
Recognition of Agency and Finding a Voice	38
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	39
REFERENCES	41

INTRODUCTION

Sha'Carri Richardson, an African American sprinter for track and field, tested positive for marijuana shortly before the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, which led to a turning point in her career and her public image. On June 28, 2021, she was suspended because she allegedly claimed that she used marijuana to assist her deal with the emotional impact from her mother's untimely death (Vomer & York, 2022). Sha'Carri Richardson's self-representation following her Olympic suspension is examined in this research paper using critical discourse analysis the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality and Black Cyberfeminism to explore the lived experiences of Black women in sports media. This study examines how race, gender, and sports intersect to uncover the effects of media narratives, self-representation, and agency in the case of Richardson. The public discourse and media craze that followed her positive drug test offer an enriching setting for dissecting the intersectional dynamics at work in sports media narratives.

At the age of 16, Sha'Carri Richardson gained recognition quickly after winning the Junior Olympics held by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and solidifying her status as the top sprint prospect in the 2018 US recruiting class. She was able to leave her mark on history by setting an impressive record of 10.75 seconds at the 2019 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) at the age of 19. She has since been honored as the fastest woman in the United States and among the fastest women in history. Subsequently, she made even more improvement in 2021, setting a record-breaking performance of 10.86 seconds at the Miami meet, which was also the sixth fastest in history, and rising to the top of the world sprint rankings to secure the spot for USA favorite in the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

The intersectionality of Black women in sports media is a neglected and understudied field of study. By focusing on self-representation and investigating how Black women exercise their agency and express themselves when facing intersecting forms of oppression in the sports media landscape and the discourse that results, this research study bridges that gap in research on this topic. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the broader discourse on media representation and social identity. By looking at Sha'Carri Richardson's response to the Olympic suspension, we can examine how media discourse can be both an oppressive and an empowering tool for Black women, particularly within sports media. This paper aims to bring insight on the systemic obstacles and social prejudices that Black women encounter in sports and beyond by dissecting the discourse surrounding Sha'Carri Richardson's Olympic fallout.

In addition, this study intends to draw attention to the necessity of more inclusive and empowering representations of Black women in sports media and to the efficacy of agency and self-representation in countering the dehumanization of Black women whilst also advocating for the fair inclusion of intersecting identities in sports media discourse. In addition to promoting a greater understanding of how marginalized people use agency to shape discourse around themselves and oppose damaging prevailing narratives, this study urges the recognition and amplification of these diverse perspectives in sports media.

THEORY SECTION

Notable feminist theorist Kimberlee Crenshaw's research has shown that Black women are frequently theoretically erased and portrayed as a monolith in the field of feminist studies, and this is also true in the context of sports media (Crenshaw, 1991). In order to dissect the lived experiences of Black female athletes, this research paper critically examines a neglected and

understudied field of study. It does so by paying particular attention to the crucial roles that intersectionality, self-representation, and Black cyberfeminism play in sports media. The focal point of inquiry in this research is the discourse surrounding Sha'Carri Richardson's response to the 2021 Tokyo Olympic fallout.

I will be using Kimberlee Crenshaw, Kishonna Gray, Mia Moody Ramirez, and bell hooks' works to provide a theoretical lens into identity and self-representation. I will also utilize the theoretical frameworks of Intersectionality and Black cyberfeminism particularly focusing on Black women's lived experiences and the possible misogynoir faced due to their intersecting identities (Razack & Joseph, 2021; Crenshaw, 2006; Carbado et al., 2013; Smrdelj & Pajnik, 2022; Board, 2020; Owens et al., 2018; Simien et al., 2019). Through the convergence of intersectionality and Black cyberfeminism as my two theoretical perspectives, my goal is to further studies on Black female athletes' self representation in sports media while also analyzing the discourses around Sha'Carri Richardson. Research on Black female athletes' representation in the media has been conducted but not many of these studies focus on how these athletes advocate for and represent themselves. Even though there has been research on how female athletes are portrayed, there is a dearth of information about black female athletes in sports media. What is known is that although these athletes are still underrepresented in traditional and online media, social media platforms provide them with a platform for self-expression and the creation of helpful discourse on gendered issues. This enables female athletes to challenge and reshape conventional gender, racial, and sexual identities in sports, as well as address this lack of coverage (Razack & Joseph, 2021; Toffoletti & Thorpe 2018).

The theoretical frameworks of intersectionality, and Black cyberfeminism will be used to support my findings in order to fully capture the lived experiences and self-representations of Black female athletes' vicarious and personal experiences of gendered racial microaggressions, discrimination, and objectification both within the context of sports media (Landgrebe, 2022). Through an analysis of the connections between Black cyberfeminism, intersectionality, and a focus on self-representation, this study aims to reveal the subtle ways in which Black female athletes challenge dominant narratives, negotiate intricate power structures, and assert agency in the ever-changing sports media landscape.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality in this study's context enables a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which various facets of identity interact in the discourse surrounding Sha'Carri Richardson's Olympic fallout and subsequent self representation. Mia Moody Ramirez, drawing on Crenshaw's paradigm for intersectionality, describes intersectionality as "the interaction of multiple identities and lived experiences of exclusion, marginalization and subordination" (Crenshaw, 2006; Carbado et al., 2013; Moody-Ramirez, 2017). This framework provides a strong theoretical foundation for examining and comprehending the complex experiences of Black women, and specifically Black female athletes, in the context of sports media. Past studies demonstrate that the idea of intersectionality, in general, is especially helpful for analyzing and comprehending the simultaneous experience of gender- and race-based oppression that Black female athletes endure (Simien et al., 2019).

The term "intersectionality" was first used by scholar Kimberlee Crenshaw to draw attention to the fact that Black women are frequently left out of the discourse surrounding

antiracist policies and feminist theory because these ideas are based on discrete experiences that frequently do not fairly represent the interplay of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw explains that these issues of exclusion cannot be resolved by simply including Black women within an existing analytical framework because the intersectional experience is more complex than the sum of racism and sexism. Instead, intersectionality must be taken into consideration in order to adequately address the specific ways in which Black women are subjugated (Crenshaw, 1991).

Simien et al. draw attention to the fact that Black female athletes serve as significant models for intersectionality theory as they experience racism and sexism unique to the interplay of their Black and female identities, as well as the integration of sport (Simien et al., 2019). A research gap shows that scholars have too frequently neglected to take into account the distinctions between Black female athletes and either White women or Black men in the context of sport, thus neglecting the significance of their intersecting identities when it comes to shaping the essence and caliber of their lived experiences participating in sports (Simien et al., 2019). The study of the complex nature of these mutually constitutive identities and the disparities that come from them can be conducted by utilizing Crenshaw's intersectionality framework, which helps prevent oversimplified analyses that consider gender and race as separate variables (Simien et al., 2019). This enables a more in-depth analysis of the ways in which Sha'Carri Richardson's self-representation reflects the intersection of various facets of her identity. This study recognizes the complex interplay between her identity as a Black female athlete and aims to identify the subtle ways in which these intersecting identities shape the discourse and narratives that surface following the 2021 Tokyo Olympic fallout.

According to Crenshaw (1991), research on the paradigms of sex discrimination frequently draws from the experiences of white women, while the model of race discrimination draws from the experiences of the most privileged Blacks. This results in a narrowing of the definitions of what constitutes sex and race discrimination, none of which include discrimination against Black women. Due to the underrepresentation of their lived experiences and the social realities of belonging to intersecting minority groups, Black female athletes are often silenced and ignored in most sports, Bruening emphasizes. This leaves them as outliers in the predominantly White male institution of sports (Bruening et al., 2005). This results in the white male media ignoring Black female athletes, historically stifling their lived experiences, and producing a kind of invisibility that has had a significant impact on popular views and perceptions, reinforcing negative dominant narratives about Black female athletes (Bruening et al., 2005).

In order to combat the monolithic portrayal of Black women in the sport realm- a realm often dominated by White and male culture-, intersectionality acts as a framework to help acknowledge not only the unique challenges Sha'Carri Richardson faces as a woman in a male-dominated sports world but also the racialized lens through which her achievements and setbacks are framed. This theoretical framework encourages investigation into the ways in which media portrayals, may reinforce stereotypes or aid in the erasure of her agency by failing to fully consider the nuances of Sha'Carri Richardson's intersecting identities. My application of intersectionality in this paper is consistent with the larger need in sports media scholarship for more thorough and inclusive assessments. By resisting the sports media's inclination to essentialize and homogenize the experiences of Black female athletes, the intersectionality framework serves as an opposition to the erasure and silencing of these athletes' lived

experiences. It also emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the intersectional nature of these athletes' identities. In order to create more Black feminist scholarship, this research aims to utilize Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality as a guiding concept that provides a foundation for navigating and understanding the intricate network of systemic factors that affect how Black women are portrayed in sports media.

BLACK CYBERFEMINISM

The phrase "Black cyberfeminism," which was coined by Kishonna Gray, is a hybrid of "Black feminism" and "cyberfeminism," redefining Black feminism to represent marginalized groups in virtual spaces and recognize the overlap of identities that operate and exist there (Richard & Gray, 2018). Theoretically, Black cyberfeminism provides a lens through which Black women's experiences in digital spaces may be examined. It proposes that Black women's bodily identities play a role in media and digital depictions and are not exclusive to only physical domains. This means that when utilizing a Black cyberfeminism lens it showcases Black women's experiences in digital and physical settings as equal realms for marginalization to occur (Richard & Gray, 2018).

Black cyberfeminism emerges as a key theoretical framework in the context of sports media, offering insight into the ways in which technology and digital platforms interact with racial and gender dynamics in Sha'Carri Richardson's self-representation. The Black cyberfeminism concept developed by Kishonna Gray emphasizes how Black women can employ digital spaces for activism, self-representation, resistance, and agency while also acknowledging the transformational potential of technology in transforming power dynamics. According to Kishonna Gray, Black Cyberfeminism is a distinct kind of virtual feminism. She characterizes it

as "an extension of Black feminist thought and virtual feminisms, that integrates the principles of interwoven social forces, distinct identities, and interconnected identities to better theorize the lives and realities of Black women." This gives Black female athletes the ability to take ownership of creating and promoting their own online personas through which they can express themselves about their unique lived experiences (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018; Board, 2020).

According to Richard & Gray (2018), Black cyberfeminism acknowledges digital platforms as sites of resistance where people use technology to challenge oppressive systems. Black Cyberfeminism serves as a lens through which to view the unique characteristics of the online Black feminist community. It does this by bringing to light the experiences, creative approaches, and strategies used by Black women to challenge media and technological hegemony; social structural oppression of technology and virtual spaces; and intersecting oppressions that are felt in virtual spaces (Richard & Gray, 2018).

Therefore, in the context of intersectionality, this theoretical framework highlights the significance and intricacy of identity construction in the media while highlighting the role of technology and digital platforms like social media as tools for empowerment, resistance, and community development (Board, 2020; Smrdelj & Pajnik, 2022). According to Richard and Gray (2018), Black Cyberfeminism offers a paradigm for comprehending the various ways that oppression can appear in the materiality of the body and how this translates into digital spaces. For Black women, their online personas and communication styles are extensions of who they are offline. Consequently, digital (social) media is essential because it gives Black women and other underprivileged groups—who frequently lack resources—a way to have their views heard and an opportunity for empowerment (Richard & Gray, 2018).

Sha'Carri Richardson's responses demonstrate the major focus of Black cyberfeminism following her disqualification from the Olympics for testing positive for marijuana. Through her interviews, social media accounts (particularly on Twitter), and the media in general, she was able to reframe the conversation and discourse around her. This effectively allowed her to challenge stereotypes of Black womanhood in general and Black female athletes in particular (Owens et al., 2018; Board, 2020). Sha'Carri's decision to interact directly with her fans helped her shape her narrative concerning Olympic repercussions, preventing the media from perpetuating negative preconceptions about Black female athletes (Owens et al., 2018; Simien et al., 2019; Board, 2020). By doing this, she was able to make her story more relatable, use technology as a tool for resistance, harness the power of self-representation, and confront misogynoir-based media discourse. Black cyberfeminism serves as an ideal framework that demonstrates how Black women's digital lives may be utilized for self-representation and successfully sheds light on how technology and digital platforms interact with racial and gender dynamics (Richard & Gray, 2018).

SELF-REPRESENTATION

Self-representation is a key concept in media studies as it is strongly connected to post-colonial studies, which interrogates colonial discourses that speak for and about the colonized. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak examines whether the "subaltern," a word used from Gramsci to describe groups outside of hegemonic power structures, can actually "speak" or be heard within the mainstream discourse in her 1988 book "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak, 2023). Understanding self-representation requires an understanding of Spivak's (1988) questions of voice and representation because this concept aids in the critical analysis of the experiences of

subaltern groups, such as Black women, who use their capacity for "speaking" as a form of resistance and to represent themselves outside of the constraints imposed by societal and media narratives (Spivak, 2023). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 1988 book "Can the Subaltern Speak?" emphasizes the centrality of speaking for oneself or self-representation in discourses surrounding feminist studies, critical race studies, postcolonial studies, and the decolonization of representation.

Self-representation is based on the notion that people have agency and actively shape and manage their narratives by negotiating power within social structures and imaginaries in the media landscape (Papacharissi, 2012). Feminist theories suggest that Black female athletes have the ability to challenge media representations of them by participating and dominating in online conversations through their interactions and self-expression (Cable, 2022; Clark & Banks, 2022). Papacharissi (2012) argues that this paradigm is essential because self-presentations become into networked performances that have to communicate polysemic material to real and imagined audiences without sacrificing the presenter's sense of self.

In light of Sha'Carri Richardson's responses to the fallout from the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, this highlights how she used her agency and self-representation to navigate and shape the discourse around her, challenging power dynamics embedded in social structures' and offering a counterbalance to the way she was portrayed in the mainstream media. Magrath (2022) asserts that the use of self-representation and active participation in the creation of one's own identity by Black female athletes provides a potent challenge to the normative, externally constructed stereotypes of Black womanhood and the externally defined, controlling images of Black women. This in turn allows Black female athletes the ability to oppose the dehumanization of

oppressed intersecting groups and widespread systems of control by resisting features of Black womanhood that are stereotyped, mocked, and criticized in the media (Magrath, 2022).

Sha'Carri Richardson utilizes her interactions with the media, both in-person and on social media platforms like Twitter, to exercise her agency. Sha'Carri Richardson takes charge of her story by speaking out about her suspension and sharing her feelings. By doing so, she challenges any potential misrepresentations and makes her point of view known. In an attempt to recover her story and restructure the discourse surrounding her, Sha'Carri Richardson has used her agency through the media to break and redistribute the dominant discourse that surrounds her. This discourse is typically constructed through white racial supremacy and patriarchal conditions. This holds significance as it questions the media's ability to communicate ideas effectively and presents technology as a means of culturally representing marginalized people (Brock, 2016; Cable, 2022).

Sha'Carri Richardson's ability to exercise her agency, by purposefully challenging dominant narratives in interviews and social media posts, modifies the discourse surrounding her identity as a Black female athlete. Via her self-representation, Sha'Carri Richardson creates a direct line of communication with her audience and an unmediated platform for her to express her perspectives and lived experiences. By focusing on her self-representation, as facet of my critical lens to analyze her interviews and social media, this study seeks to understand the subtle ways in which Sha'Carri Richardson uses the media to create and share her own story and provide a nuanced account that counteracts the media's propensity to stereotype Black female athletes (Crenshaw, 2006; Smrdelj & Pajnik, 2022). This is consistent with the claim made by

Papacharissi (2012) that self-representation turns into a weapon of resistance by challenging prevailing narratives and providing a different viewpoint.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To contextualize my research on American track and field athlete Sha'Carri Richardson's response and self-representation to her 2021 Tokyo Olympic suspension, I will be highlighting previous research and literature on “The struggles of the Black athlete”, “Layers of (a racialized) Identity”, and “The Black female athlete” in order to provide understanding to analyze my work on the intersectionality of Black women in sports media. An in-depth understanding of the political, social, and historical factors influencing black athletes' experiences in sports can be gained from this literature on their struggles. In order to accomplish this, I will emphasize studies on widespread racial stereotypes and biases that have traditionally disadvantaged black athletes. Simultaneously, I will examine how race, identity, and sports media representation interact in the section on "Layers of (a racialized) Identity," delving into the ways that societal beliefs and historical legacies influence racialized identities. The final section on “The Black female athlete” will examine previous research on this topic as Black female athletes occupy a special and often underappreciated place in the world of athletics, where racial and gender marginalization intersect to shape their experiences on and off the field. The combination of these sections from my literature reviews sheds light on the complex relationships between race, identity, and representation in sports. It also highlights the gap in previous research that my own study aims to fill, which is, the urgent need for more inclusive and nuanced narratives of Black female athletes in sports media.

REPRESENTATIONAL STRUGGLES OF BLACK ATHLETES

A solid basis for understanding the political, social, and historical factors highlighting the struggles and influencing Black people's experiences in sports is provided by this literature on Black athletes. This section reviews literature that has been written about the Black athlete phenomenon, emphasizing important themes, summarizing research findings, pointing out gaps in the literature, and making connections to the literature that I have researched. This review seeks to describe the studies done highlighting the struggles of Black Athletes and illustrates its significance within the larger field of sports studies by mapping the existing body of work.

The representation of black athletes in media has been a subject of scholarly inquiry and societal concern for decades (Edwards, 1999). Research indicates that despite there being a history of research on Black athletes and their activism, there is still a need to comprehend Black athletes' experiences from the perspective of the Black body (Williams et al., 2023). Wiggins (2014) emphasizes that although African Americans have made significant strides in the sporting world, racism and related structural disparities have always made it difficult for them to fully participate in the sporting world. Messner (2002) draws attention to the complex interplay that Black athletes encounter in the sports industry in his work. He highlights that when racial dynamics are taken into account, sports spaces can be viewed as a reassertion of white male identity, in response to a perceived displacement from “their” space by black males (Messner, 2002).

Black athletes have been historically and frequently portrayed in media as inferior or exotic in comparison to that of their white counterparts and these harmful portrayals frequently perpetuate prejudices or tokenize their accomplishments (Messner, 2002). Racial prejudices and

preconceptions have always permeated the media's portrayal of black athletes throughout history. Wiggins (2014) emphasizes that any hopes for 'color-blind' sports were wrecked by the turn of the 20th century. Black rights in the USA were deteriorating at the time due to a number of issues, including the hardening of racial boundaries and the pervasive notion that African Americans are inferior (Wiggins, 2014). Black people have been historically considered inferior to White people, according to Smith (1993), who also claims that racism and athletics are inextricably intertwined. This often led to black athletes being marginalized, excluded, or relegated to separate leagues and competitions like "The Negro Leagues" in organized baseball as a direct result of their exclusion from white athletic teams (Smith,1993).

Racial prejudices and preconceptions still have an impact on how black athletes are portrayed in the media today, despite social progress since the days of overt segregation. Over the course of the last century, the "black athlete" has been assigned various positions in various political and historical periods, according to Deeb & Love (2018). These roles have included being blamed for the problems facing the Black community to being burdened with the expectations of being its savior (Deeb & Love, 2018). In spite of their accomplishments, black athletes are frequently the target of stereotypes that uphold racialized ideas of what constitutes "typically exceptional" athleticism, which goes beyond physical characteristics to include unfavorable connotations like arrogance, immaturity, and low intelligence (Deeb & Love, 2018). This idea of innate athleticism reinforced by the overemphasis on black athletes' physical characteristics in sports media coverage, acts as a way of minimizing the importance of skills, strategy, and hard work in Black athletes' accomplishments. Hull et al., (2022) gives an example of how Black athletes suffer from unfavorable connotations in sports media by giving the example of golf commentary shown towards 'Tiger Woods', a Black-Asian bi-racial player, who

was only portrayed with Black athletic stereotypes when he was losing, meanwhile, when Woods performed well or won, he was described as having favorable white stereotypes. Hull et al., (2022) goes on to say that biases in sports commentators' analysis are common and that race and sport has long been examined through the prism of racial stereotypes of White and Black athletes.

Raney & Bryant (2006) observed that the majority of early representations of Black athletes in film cast them in supporting roles or portrayed them as obstacles that White athletes had to overcome. Critics countered that even in films with a Black protagonist at the center of the story, the narrative reinforced White superiority (Raney & Bryant, 2006). In addition, black athletes in advertisements are frequently the target of "licking," which is defined as "manipulating images into forms that tap viewers' preconceived notions." This is because licking images frequently reinforce popular stereotypes of Black people in advertisements, which depict black men in particular as violent, savage, primitive, and hypersexual (Dufur, 1997). The existing literature on Black athletes acts as a foundation for understanding the interconnectedness of racism in sports and provides historical context for the damaging stereotypes that are often reinforced through media.

LAYERS OF RACIALIZED IDENTITY

This literature review examines the various layers of racialized identity within sports media, highlighting key themes that contribute to an understanding of how race shapes individual and collective identities as well as how it intersects with sports media representation. The origins of racialized identity can be traced to the historical legacies of white supremacy, colonialism, and slavery. In his works, Hall (2020) emphasizes that identity is never something that is

predetermined by sociological or biological essence and is always something that is constructed in discourse. Identity is one of the most important constructs because it speaks to who we are, what groups we belong to, how we perceive ourselves, and how we are perceived by others (Worrell, 2023). This emphasizes that social interactions, personal experiences, and larger cultural narratives all play a part in the dynamic and ongoing process of an individual or collective's racial identity construction. According to research, racial hierarchies and ideologies were established by colonial powers, which means that race and ethnicity have the ability to carry powerful cultural and national-popular implications in society (Hall, 2020). Since then, these categories have been utilized to forge enduring prejudices and preconceptions that still influence racial identities today.

Regarding racial identity, specifically Black identity, research indicates that during the 1960s and 1970s, self-hatred was a prevalent theme in studies on Black identity (Worrell, 2023). Theorizing about Black identity for the past 50 years, however, has allowed William E. Cross, Jr. to make a significant contribution to the literature on psychology on Black identity. His contributions have enhanced our comprehension of Black identity and its practical applications. Dr. William E. Cross, Jr. argues in his works of scholarship that a deficit lens should not be used to analyze Black identity (Worrell, 2023). According to him, Black identity in America represents human flourishing, even in the face of severe maltreatment (Worrell, 2023). The use of psychological theories concerning the development of racial identity offer valuable perspectives on how people negotiate their racial identity as this perspective has completely changed how identity is studied in Black and other marginalized communities in the US. With his "Nigrescence Theory" model, William Cross was able to capture the dynamic nature of racial identity formation in his work by adopting an approach to scholarship that acknowledged and

honored people's lived experiences from infancy through adulthood and recognized the importance of relationships and socialization experiences in the formation of identity (Worrell, 2023). Sullivan et al., (2018) states particularly when dealing with the concept of black racial identity, there is a lack of a standard definition, however, researchers have highlighted that it is an ambiguous and socially constructed identity that is 'emerging, changing, and complex' and is viewed as “meanings a person attributes to the self as an object in a social situation or social role,” which relates to a “sense of people-hood, which provides a sense of belonging.” (Sullivan et al., 2018)

Hundley & Billings (2010) point out in their works that examining race is a key component of media sport studies on identity. While media gatekeepers primarily continue to describe with stereotyped black or white categorical distinctions, sometimes leading to overarching categories defined by one's skin color, they contend that race is more than just skin color and works as a more complicated identity variable within sports scholarship (Hundley & Billings, 2010). In his works Cokley (2005) highlights that there is a disproportionately large number of racial identity studies that have been conducted with African American participants due to the conceptualization of racial identity development that occurred during the turbulent struggle of Blacks for civil rights in the United States.

Sullivan et al., (2018) states a large portion of these research studies on racial identity with early mainstream perspective research, used a group's social standing and stigma to define racial identity. The stigma associated with racial identification has permeated the sports industry, as the development of racial identity in sports is influenced by similar historical legacies, social settings, and cultural narratives. Academics such as Hull et al. (2022) have brought attention to

the ways in which racial stereotypes and hierarchies affect opportunities in the sports world. Hull et al. (2022) provide statistics demonstrating that White males hold the majority of positions in sports journalism, including 85% of sports editors, 80% of columnists, and 82% of reporters. These studies demonstrate, for instance, that the occasions in which there is a deficit of Black journalists are significantly more often than not.

Overall, racial identification has a big impact on how people experience day to day life in society and how they see the world, even in the context of sports. The experiences, perspectives, and possibilities athletes have in sports are significantly impacted by their racial identity. The negative preconceptions associated with race have an impact on athletes' performance, psychological health, and coping mechanisms. This emphasizes how critical it is to eliminate biased and harmful prejudiced views in media coverage in order to stop the continuation of disparities in the sports world. By being aware of these consequences, it serves as a foundation for knowledge to close the knowledge gap in my research as it highlights Black racial identity in a way that advances inclusion, equity, and diversity in sports.

THE BLACK FEMALE ATHLETE

In the world of athletics, black female athletes occupy a special and frequently overlooked position. Black women have historically experienced intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination on the basis of both gender and race. Due to historical prejudices, societal dynamics, and cultural narratives specific to their intersecting identities, black female athletes are exposed to a variety of experiences and obstacles that shape their experiences within sports.

In the realm of Sports, Raney & Bryant, (2006) state that portrayals of women as athletes are rare, and, even then, critics argue that women are still portrayed as subservient to men, stating that “Women can compete in athletics, but only to the extent that it doesn’t impede, and better yet supports, conservative ideas”. According to Velloso (2022), one of the key strategies used to keep sports as a primarily male domain is the marginalization of women's sports and female athletes in media coverage, which results in the delegitimization of these demographics. Hardin et al. (2004) further reinforces these gendered forms of marginalization by noting that the majority of scholars who specifically study sport media concentrate on gender representations and the systematic media promotion of "sexual difference," or the notion that women are "naturally" less suited to sports than men.

Raney & Bryant (2006) highlight that there is also a need to examine “the intersection of race and gender” in the sports media, as sport literature contains few analyses in which Black women are subjects of study. Black women, according to Hardin et al. (2004), have been virtually invisible in the media and in the advancement of feminist theory and philosophy, whereas Black men are overly athleticized in popular culture. The interplay of race, class, sexuality, and gender in the sports media has not received much attention, but as Raney & Bryant (2006) point out, this indicates that more research is needed to understand the "racialized construction of gender and sexuality" that frames women of color as the "Other" and "in order to reinforce white women as the hegemonic standard." A common way of ‘othering’ Black women is by using "controlling images," Velloso (2022) contends that media texts frequently portray Black women in ways that prevent "diverse representation of Black femininity beyond the pretense of the dominant imagination and orchestrates demoralized understandings of Black girls and women." with majority of the images reinforcing stereotypes of Black women, portraying

them in ways that are "hypersexualized, sassy and aggressive" or in stereotypically matriarchal situations (Velloso, 2022). bell hooks (2014) discusses the particular kind of exclusion that Black women experience, pointing out that when black people are discussed, sexism works to undermine the acknowledgment of black women's interests, and when women are discussed, racism works to undermine the recognition of black women's interests. bell hooks (2014) argues that Black men are typically the center of attention when discussing Black people, and White women are typically the center of attention when discussing women often leaving Black women to the sidelines.

According to Hardin et al. (2004), Black women's experiences of oppression in sports differ from White women's because Black women have historically been portrayed as both sexually and racially different and deviant. Black female athletes confront "the double burden/challenge of prejudice concerning both sex and race," as noted by Velloso (2022) as they face racial prejudices related to their race as well as gendered preconceptions based on their gender. As a result, their experiences are radically different from those of White female athletes (Velloso, 2022). Therefore, widespread disregard and misrepresentation of Black women athletes is the outcome of this mix of racial and gendered oppression (Velloso, 2022). Hardin et al. (2004) gives the example of how White feminine standards from at least the early 1900s continue to impact Black American female athletes' sporting images and realities today. Black women face a unique form of marginalization since they must combat prejudices that are both sexist and racial. The work of Hardin et al. (2004) emphasizes this point by pointing out that Black women, who are viewed as "naturally" more athletic and masculine than White women, continue to face stricter standards of femininity. Due to this, sports dominated by Black women like basketball are now viewed as culturally masculine because women in these sports typically receive less

media attention than women in more "sexually different" and therefore "feminine" sports like figure skating and tennis (Hardin et al., 2004). As Hardin et al.'s (2004) study demonstrates, the rise of Black women in track and field fueled negative stereotypes of Black athletic women in American culture as "man-ladies." This over masculinization of some sports then contributes to the over masculinization of Black female athletes. Velloso (2022) draws attention to this over-masculinization by pointing out that research in sports, in particular, reveals that the most prevalent racism discourses in coverage of Black female athletes are encountered in descriptions that highlight the power, athleticism, and muscularity of their bodies, leading to a Western fetishization of "Black muscularity."

Past research examines the various and multidimensional ways that Black female athletes are portrayed in sports media, emphasized in the works of Velloso (2022), who states that the practice of overly connecting Black women to physical strength can lead to a stereotype that suggests these women lack the qualities typically associated with womanhood, and therefore fall outside the definition of a naturally occurring woman. This stereotype also fails to acknowledge the role that hard work and intelligence have played in Black athletes' success, perpetuating the long-standing belief that Black athletes lack intelligence (Velloso, 2022). Velloso (2022) goes on to add that while Black female athletes encounter racial stereotypes that portray them as unfeminine, they also encounter prejudices that are similar to those faced by their White counterparts, such as the downplaying of their athletic prowess and the emphasis placed on their life outside of athletics. This creates a complicated paradox in which Black female athletes are presented as both "natural" in terms of race and "unnatural" in terms of gender, where their muscularity and athleticism transcend the boundaries of hegemonic femininity (Velloso, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

In order to analyze Sha'Carri Richardson's self-representation and media narratives surrounding her disqualification from the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, this research study uses a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. Utilizing the Critical Discourse framework developed by van Dijk in his seminal work "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," this study aims to uncover power dynamics and investigate how they impact the agency and self-representation of individuals with intersecting identities.

The data used in this study is on two specific interviews given by Sha'Carri Richardson post-Olympic fallout, which are accessible via YouTube links provided in the references. The first video titled "Exclusive: Sha'Carri Richardson Speaks Out About Failed Drug Test" is a live interview on the Today Show, which aired on July 2, 2021, and the second video analyzed titled "Sha'Carri Richardson: 'I'm Not Back. I'm Better'" was another live interview on May 26, 2023, this time for Citius Mag.

The two interviews and the transcripts that have been made available on YouTube are the key sources of data used in this study. They were chosen because they directly addressed Sha'Carri Richardson's experiences and reflections after she was suspended from the Olympics. Although both videos are available in entirety on YouTube, I will be using van Dijk's Critical Discourse analysis framework as a guide for my study, emphasizing important themes in each video and concentrating on the most pertinent portions of the interviews. Using van Dijk's technique of analysis, I will be concentrating on these themes, primarily on the micro-level, such as word choice in language, and the macro-level social impact, such as power dynamics and the effects of intersecting social identities.

I allowed themes to naturally develop from the data while conducting my analysis, but I also included theoretical insights from van Dijk's framework, which enabled me to pay particular attention to themes pertaining to self-representation, agency, and the intersectionality of race and gender. During my analysis of the interviews, I paid close attention to word choice, tone of voice, and body language as the foundation for discourse structure in order to comprehend how Sha'Carri Richardson tells her own story. It was then necessary to conduct additional analysis and interpretation in order to decipher the discourse. As a result, I used my theories of frameworks and previously published relevant scholarship to investigate how Sha'Carri Richardson constructs her identity as a Black female athlete and navigates her self-image in the context of her Olympic fallout. This discourse was then placed within larger social, political, and historical contexts, demonstrating how Sha'Carri Richardson's self-representation and the discourse she created simultaneously reflect and challenge established power structures, particularly with regard to the intersections of race, gender, and athlete identity.

ANALYSIS Today Show INTERVIEW

Sha'Carri Richardson's journey from winning the Olympic women's tryouts to facing suspension captured the public's interest and sparked a wide range of discourse and opinions. Even though this study does not directly address public opinion on the subject, it is important to remember that fans and the media frequently criticize female athletes (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018), and Black female athletes, according to Velloso (2022), especially deal with the double burden of discrimination related to both sex and race in sports media. Four days after being suspended from the Tokyo Olympics for testing positive for marijuana, Sha'Carri Richardson appeared in a live interview on the *Today Show*, which aired on July 2, 2021. In addition to

examining the impact of Sha'Carri Richardson's actions, words, and discourse surrounding her contentious disqualification, this analysis delves into the nuances of the interview and the larger cultural discourse surrounding the significance of Black female athletes using their agency online to create a more authentic and empowered self and changing the discourse surrounding their careers to one that prioritizes them telling their own stories.

The 12-minute interview begins with a brief overview of Sha'Carri Richardson's Olympic trials, emphasizing that she was the fastest woman in America when she won the 100-meter race in 10.86 seconds, but she was immediately disqualified after testing positive for the chemical compound THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol), which is present in marijuana. An emotional moment in the introduction occurs at the two-minute mark, when Sha'Carri is seen embracing her grandmother following the success of her tryouts, which took place only one week after she lost her biological mother. Following the brief introduction to Sha'Carri and the status of her suspension, at 2:29 in the interview, the TODAY show highlight Sha'Carri Richardson's infamous tweet posted the day after she learned about her suspension that read, "I am human,".

Struggles with Mental Health and Vulnerability

Savannah Guthrie, the interviewer, asks Sha'Carri how she is doing at the beginning of the live interview at 2:34. She answers, "I am blessed to be alive, that's about it," and her body language displays what I would describe as a nervous smile and jittery swaying movements.

Sha'Carri Richardson's choice of words and admission that she was "blessed to be alive" highlight the severity of the difficulties she was going through at the time, and the way she phrased it helps to shape both her story and the larger discourse about her mental health.

According to Singh (2023)'s article, Sha'Carri Richardson had previously admitted to trying to

take her own life. Singh (2023)'s article also highlights that this was an additional layer of problems due to her Olympic suspension, adding to her already existing mental health issues following the loss of her mother (Singh, 2023). Within the larger discourse surrounding resilience and mental health, Sha'Carri Richardson's word choice can also be seen as an act of opposition or resistance. While simultaneously challenging societal expectations and norms highlighted by Scott (2021) that demand Black females' unwavering mythical strength that demands they go on no matter their fears, Sha'Carri Richardson's choice of words challenges traditional narratives of strength and stoicism surrounding Black female athletes by acknowledging her struggles and expressing her gratitude for survival. Scott (2021) continues by pointing out that Sha'Carri Richardson was able to give voice to the truth of the myth of unshakable strength for Strong Black women, which has long been overlooked, by displaying emotional vulnerability and acknowledging she was not superhuman. Scott (2021) goes on to say that Sha'Carri Richardson's vulnerability served as a good example for many Black women of what it meant to be a Black woman who acknowledges that emotions are a part of who we are as humans.

Accountability and Public Scrutiny

At the 3:00 mark, Savannah Guthrie emphasizes that she is aware that Sha'Carri Richardson wished to share her personal account of the events leading up to the drug test result. At 3:12, Sha'Carri Richardson starts her speech by stating, "Honestly, I want to apologize for my actions. I know what i did. I know what I'm supposed to do. what I'm allowed not to do and still made that decision. " Regarding the way she frames her apology, Sha'Carri Richardson takes responsibility for her actions immediately and positions herself at the forefront in the discourse

by acknowledging that she is responsible for her actions and takes ownership for choices and the outcomes of those choices. Fairclough (2003) emphasizes in his works the significance of interpretative work during the discourse analysis process between the speaker/reader and the listener/audience in order to construct meaning. Fairclough (2003) goes on to say that meanings are created by the interaction of various interpretative factors, and that one must consider the institutional position, as well as the interests, values, intentions, and wants of those who produce discourse. Regarding Sha'Carri Richardson, she acknowledges that she utilizes her agency despite the fact she is aware of the repercussions of her actions and the conflict this causes because of her institutional position as an athlete defying the institutional authority of the United States Anti-Doping Agency that governs drug use. Her choice of words helps to draw on these interpretative forces and she is able to create a narrative within the discourse of personal responsibility that shapes the tone of her apology.

Sha'Carri Richardson extends her apologies from 3:23 to 4:28 with a number of her remarks standing out, and I will examine them. She reiterates her position on establishing a sense of accountability regarding the issue and emphasizes that she is "not making an excuse or looking for empathy in my case." At 3:49 she states "people don't understand what its like to have to have to...or people do..., we all have our different struggles, we all have our different things we're dealing with, but to put on a face, to have to go in front of the world and put on a face and hide my pain" Here, Sha'Carri Richardson effectively expresses a profound reflection of the broader cultural norms and expectations placed on athletes, as well as the resulting public scrutiny. Gallmeier (1987) emphasizes in his works the performative aspect of athletes adopting particular emotional presentations to manage the expectations of their audience and the demands of their sport. Gallmeier (1987)'s findings highlight Bronco, a 7-year hockey veteran who

explains "Ten percent of this game is physical; 90 percent of it is mental. You have to be ready mentally and emotionally before you go out there. If you're not, then its going to show. I don't care how good you are" (Gallmeier, 1987, p. 351). According to Gallmeier's (1987) research, athletes' emotional performances are shaped by social norms and institutional expectations. This highlights how for many athletes, displays of emotions are not just personal expressions but also tactical reactions to external pressures, highlighting the intricacies of the coping mechanisms that athletes must employ when competing in public. Sha'Carri Richardson's admission of "putting on a face" in this instance indicates that she is conscious of the expectations society has of her as an athlete, causing her to adhere to conventional narratives of the performance of stoicism and strength when in the public eye. Sha'Carri Richardson then challenges the societal norms identified in Gallmeier's (1987) study, which contend that athletes ought to mask their emotions behind a facade of strength. She says, "to put on a face, to have to go in front of the world and put on a face and hide my pain." This alludes to the pressure Sha'Carri Richardson faced to perform well in intense competitions following the death of her mother without displaying any signs of weakness or emotional distress. These remarks highlight broader societal norms surrounding emotional expression and vulnerability, especially in the context of sports. Sha'Carri Richardson then poses a thought-provoking question that encourages self-expression and authenticity by asking "who are you or who am I to tell you how to cope when you're dealing with a pain or you're dealing with a struggle that you never experienced before.... who am i to tell you how to cope? ". This question highlights the subjectivity of coping strategies and the difficulty of recommending a 'universal' effective method for healing and grief. By challenging these social norms, she was able to shape the discourse around her Olympic fallout by calling out

the media's power structures that pass judgment and shifting the conversation's tone to one that inspires empathy from the audience in exchange for their support during her time of loss.

Navigating Public Trauma and Media Representations

At 5:14, reporter Savannah Guthrie recounts and asks Sha'Carri Richardson for clarification so that others can understand her perspective. She mentions that a few days prior to her big race, a reporter broke the news of her biological mother's death to her, which ultimately led to her consuming marijuana. Sha'Carri Richardson then goes on to respond from 5:53-6:56 recounting that this was indeed how it occurred, thinking it would be a normal interview and was bombarded with the news. She says, "To hear that information come from a complete stranger, it was definitely triggering". She goes on to explain " it definitely put me in a state of emotional panic if anything, and still knowing that ... i still have to go out and put on a performance for my dream, go out there and compete." she highlights that " from there (I) was blinded by emotions, blinded by bad news, blinded by just hurting honestly".

Sha'Carri highlights a critical moment in the interview when she states that receiving the news from a stranger was "definitely triggering." This statement captures the impact of the negative emotions she was faced with at the time and highlights a critical moment where her personal boundaries were violated by bringing her private grief into the public sphere. The term "representational intersectionality" is highlighted by Crenshaw (1991) in her work as a framework for comprehending how the intersections of race and gender are represented in institutions and public discourse. This is emphasized in Jones's (2007) work, which explores the cultural and historical background of Black women's boundaries not being respected in public spheres. Jones (2007) emphasizes how Black women have long been the target of intrusive

questioning and exploitation in public settings, which has weakened their autonomy and perpetuated harmful stereotypes. The story of Sha'Carri Richardson discovering her mother had passed away publicly, exemplifies the reinforcement of this phenomena by the media as the invasion of Black women's personal boundaries in public spheres is highlighted. Sha'Carri Richardson's personal tragedy being intruded by the media and finding its way into her professional life is indicative of larger racialized and gendered prejudiced patterns, which frequently subject Black women to increased scrutiny and privacy invasion in public spaces. Sha'Carri Richardson acknowledges that receiving the news in that manner put her "in a state of emotional panic," highlighting the psychological toll of coping with personal trauma. However, she still felt pressure to "go out to compete and put on a performance" even though she was "blinded by emotions and bad news". This highlights the detrimental expectations that are addressed by Scott (2021) that perpetuate the harmful notion that athletic heroism and stoicism are inherently positive traits. As a result, athletes frequently face the pressure of suppressing their emotions in order to succeed competitively. This interview with Sha'Carri Richardson, when engaged with critically, creates a discourse on the detrimental effects of these destructive expectations while shedding light on the intricate relationships between athlete's performative identity, performance pressures, and personal trauma within the context of professional athletics. By examining the discourse during this interview, we can see how Sha'Carri Richardson's story challenges popular perceptions of ignoring one's mental health for athletic achievement and highlights the challenges that naturally exist between harmful expectations and public performance in the word of sports media. Sha'Carri Richardson ends her interview with a strong statement to her supporters, sponsors, and critics: "I'm human, We're human. My interviews, i want to be as transparent as possible with you guys, whether its good, whether its bad" ending

off the interview at 11:21 by saying "After my sanction is up, I'll be back and able to compete.... next time i step on the track I'll be ready for whatever". Sha'Carri Richardson's decision to highlight her humanity in an interview challenges popular narratives about athletes' stoicism and perfection. It also serves as a way to acknowledge and connect with her audience's common experiences of hardship and loss and how it has impacted her career. She uses the phrase "We're human," highlighting common vulnerabilities and challenges, to go beyond her personal experience and speak to the larger human condition. Sha'Carri Richardson underscores the relevance of empathy and compassion in overcoming obstacles in life and the universality of her message by situating herself within the larger framework of humankind. According to Richard and Gray's (2018) work, Sha'Carri Richardson employs Black cyberfeminism to challenge oppressive systems that perpetuate harmful stereotypes of dehumanizing Black women by using digital platforms—in this case, her live interview—as a site of resistance.

Sha'Carri Richardson's decision to be open and honest in her interview sends a strong message about her desire for agency and self-definition as well as her transparency, which challenges social norms and expectations in the world of professional sports. Collins (2002) goes into great detail about this, emphasizing the significance of Black women using their agency for self-definition because it re-frames the conversation and emphasizes the power dynamics that underlie not only what has been said about Black women but also the legitimacy and the intentions of those with power to define. In a media environment where Black female athletes are frequently subjected to constrictive and limited narratives, Sha'Carri Richardson's assertion that she is prepared to embrace whatever is thrown at her and be transparent through it serves as a means of her reattaining her agency and self definition.

CITIUS MAG INTERVIEW

The evolution of Sha'Carri Richardson's agency and self-representation in relation to her career and the aftermath from her Olympic experience will be the focus of my second segment of analysis. Sha'Carri Richardson spoke with reporters live once again on May 26, 2023, this time for Citius Mag, two days before her 100-meter race at the LA Grand Prix. Starting off the interview, she was prompted with a question that said, "You said you're 'making peace' with the track, what does that mean?". She responds to this, and in her response, I will examine three significant themes that highlight her growth surrounding the matter.

Understanding the Industry using Navigational Agency

In response to the question, she starts off by highlighting that she has her peace back in this industry, as she went through a rough time she mentions " I went through a lot, a lot of you guys recorded it reported it, covered it, and talked about it and I had to live with that.... I had to learn myself, I had to understand the industry that I literally was thrown into and became basically almost one of the best at the age of 19". By reiterating that she is at peace, she is demonstrating that she has not only grown into her agency but is now exercising it. She makes use of Claassen's (2018) definition of agency and navigational agency, which frequently adopts a reflexive stance that emphasizes both the ability to reflect on and modify one's goals and aspirations in relation to one's circumstances, alongside having the capacity to achieve one's goals within current social structures. In order to support her navigational agency and be able to withstand public scrutiny while keeping her focus on her goals and well-being, Sha'Carri Richardson was able to emphasize the significance of self-reflection and the necessity of learning how to understand and express herself in a dominating industry. Sha'Carri Richardson

demonstrates a skillful use of navigational agency to realign her goals and aspirations with her reality by reframing her connection with the track and field industry from one of conflict to one of peace. She acknowledged her success in the track and field world at such a young age, as well as the difficulties she had following that, she highlights the importance of comprehending the dynamics of the sports world and particularly how it treats young Black female athletes. She talks about how she was "thrown into" the industry and how, in order to survive, she had to quickly adjust. She realized that no matter what, she was being watched and had to learn how to live in this new world with unfamiliar social structures and institutions. This realization gave Sha'Carri Richardson the confidence to take back control of her story and establish her place in the sport, demonstrating her worth and competence in the face of criticism and skepticism from the outside world.

Self-Empowerment and Support Systems

She goes on to highlight the value and importance of her support systems and self representation as she highlights "I definitely just had to learn a lot I, had to grow a lot, I had to mature and within myself I just had to understand that no matter what happens on the outside my faith my support system and the people that are going to support me are going to understand always". According to Mitchell et al. (2014), athletes who use their social support systems to help them deal with the pressures and difficulties that come with competing in sports may experience less stressors overall. This emphasizes the crucial role that social support has in athletes' psychological resilience and performance. Collins (2002) highlights that African American women have traditionally used family networks and Black community institutions as sites for countering oppressive images that affect their self definitions often found in institutions

like print and broadcast media. Sha'Carri Richardson was able to employ community-based coping mechanisms to navigate her circumstances, help her reclaim herself, and regain some of her agency. This is highlighted by the focus placed on her faith and support system as pillars among chaos. This is reinforced by Mitchell et al., (2014) works where they highlight that athletes' perceptions of having access to emotional support often serve as significant sources of reinforcement, enhancing their sense of self-worth and self-belief. Sha'Carri Richardson emphasizes that she had a lot to learn and that growing up required a lot of self-empowerment and support, particularly in the high-pressure setting of professional sports. In addition to the physical rigors of their sport, athletes like as Sha'Carri Richardson deal with the psychological strain of being a black female athlete in the midst of competition, public scrutiny, and personal challenges. Sha'Carri Richardson utilizes a term called 'post traumatic growth' explained by Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004) as positive psychological development brought about by overcoming extremely difficult situations in one's life. Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004) emphasize that support systems can help with post-traumatic growth through offering an opportunity to build narratives about the changes that have occurred and by presenting perspectives that can be taken in for change, which can help with effectively navigating these problems. Additionally, Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004) emphasize how progress for an individual involves more than just getting back up on one's feet, rather, it involves gaining new insights and life skills that strengthen one's resilience and sense of purpose. Sha'Carri Richardson demonstrates these abilities by reflecting on her progress and sharing her thoughts about herself and the circumstances with a little more compassion. This is especially evident in the manner in which she speaks and acts during the interview with a happy expression on her face and positive body language.

Recognition of agency and Finding a Voice

Sha'Carri Richardson's Olympic fallout journey exemplifies a story of going beyond her past mistakes and achieving a higher level of agency, self expression, and self-awareness. Her statement, "I'm not back, I'm better...it just was me that stands in my way. Now I'm with myself so I have no problems now to pick it up, be on the track and to do what it is that we all know that I can do," is a potent declaration of her increased agency, which has resulted in personal development and maturity, and a strong marker to her evolution. Sha'Carri Richardson's decision to state again that she is better than she was before strikes a deep chord with concepts that Collins (2002) discussed about Black women's journey of self-definition and finding a voice. According to Collins (2002), the process of self-definition for Black women is a means of comprehending how the intersectional oppressions of race, gender, sexual orientation, and class impact one's personal life and, more importantly, the political implications this has for them. Sha'Carri Richardson's word choice in this interview, as opposed to her previous one, reveals a significant change in how she views the aftermath of the Olympics, reflecting how her identity has grown both on and off the track. She boldly displays her drive to reach her goals and confidently declares that she believes she can succeed in any circumstance, despite her prior mistakes. Sha'Carri Richardson's admission that her former self was the primary obstacle standing in her way shows how much she has grasped the importance of her agency and that growth stemmed from change within rather than approval from others. She displays how her increased confidence goes beyond a simple comeback story and instead represents a realization attained by facing and overcoming the complex and varied hurdles presented by the sporting world as a Black female athlete. This insight is consistent with Collins' (2002) finding that the process of self-definition has significant political implications since it gives Black women a

sense of agency and consciousness that can be a source of power. Sha'Carri Richardson's sense of self has provided her with a self-assurance that is crucial for athletes and acts as a source of inspiration for other Black female athletes. Sha'Carri Richardson's self representation during her Olympic fallout showcases the importance of agency and self definition, particularly for Black female athletes and highlights the importance of Black women telling their own stories. Her experiences, marked by public scrutiny and personal challenges, have not only shaped her understanding of her identity but act as a framework within sports media in highlighting how Black female athletes experience the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and the pressures of professional athletics.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the complex layers of intersectionality that affect Black women in sports media through a critical discourse analysis of Sha'Carri Richardson's self-representation and response to her fallout from the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. Through the application of van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis framework and theoretical frameworks of Black cyberfeminism and intersectionality to Sha'Carri Richardson's public interviews, this study not only unravels the discourse surrounding her Olympic fallout but also sheds light on the larger socio-political dynamics at work. This study uses critical discourse analysis to highlight the complexities of the fight for self-representation and agency, as well as the role that the media plays in influencing how the general public perceives people who identify with several intersecting identities, such as Black female athletes.

In addition to advancing a neglected area of literature on Black women's self-representation, this study on Sha'Carri Richardson emphasizes the need for continued research

and recognition of the diverse experiences and narratives of Black female athletes in order to ultimately foster a more inclusive and equitable sports media landscape. Since intersectionality is a broad concept, this research points to a number of potential directions for future investigation. Although it was only briefly discussed in this study, future research on the connection between media representation of athletes, especially Black women, and mental health discourse is crucial. Further related research could potentially support more inclusive and equitable environment in sports media to highlight and support the diversity and resiliency of athletes from all backgrounds.

REFERENCES

- Board, W. E. (2020). 'Intersectionality Went Viral': Toxic Platforms, Distinctive Black Cyberfeminism and Fighting Misogynoir – An Interview with Kishonna Gray. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 15(1), 68–73. <https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.367>
- Brock, A. (2016). Critical technocultural discourse analysis. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 1012–1030. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816677532>
- Bruening, J. E., Armstrong, K. L., & Pastore, D. L. (2005). Listening to the Voices: The Experiences of African American Female Student Athletes. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 76(1), 82–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2005.10599264>
- Cable, J. (2022). “Best way to silence the haters?”: Raheem Sterling’s use of social media and selective press interviews in the fight against racism. *In Athlete Activism In* (1st ed., Vol. 1, pp. 167–180). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003140290-16>
- Carbado, D. W., Crenshaw, K. W., Mays, V. M., & Tomlinson, B. (2013). Intersectionality: Mapping the movements of a theory. *Du Bois Review*, 10(2), 303–312. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1742058x13000349>
- CITIUS MAG. (2023, May 26). *Sha’carri Richardson: “I’m not back. I’m better.”* YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_pI8pq-2q8
- Claassen, R. (2018). *Capabilities in a just society : a theory of navigational agency*. Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, M. R., & Banks, A. (2022). Introduction: Thinking of a Black Digital Ethos. *Social Media + Society*, 8(3), 205630512211175. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221117568>

- Cokley, K. O. (2005). Racial(ized) Identity, Ethnic Identity, and Afrocentric Values: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges in Understanding African American Identity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(4), 517–526. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.4.517>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics [1989]. In *Feminist Legal Theory* (1st ed., pp. 57–80). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429500480-5>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>
- Crenshaw, K. W. (2006). Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color. *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, 2–3. <https://doi.org/10.7146/kkf.v0i2-3.28090>
- Deeb, A., & Love, A. (2018). Media Representations of Multiracial Athletes. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 42(2), 95–114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723517749598>
- Dufur, M. (1997). Race Logic and “Being like Mike”: Representations of Athletes in Advertising, 1985-1994. *Sociological Focus* (Kent, Ohio), 30(4), 345–356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.1997.10571085>
- Edwards, J. (1999). The black female athlete and the politics of (in)visibility. *New Political Economy*, 4(2), 278–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563469908406401>
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse* (Vol. 270). London: routledge.
- Gallmeier, C. P. (1987). Putting on the Game Face: The Staging of Emotions in Professional Hockey. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 4(4), 347–362. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.4.4.347>

- Hall, S. (2020). Five The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power [1992]. In *Essential Essays*, Volume 2 (pp. 141–184). Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478002710-010>
- Hardin, M., Dodd, J. E., Chance, J., & Walsdorf, K. (2004). Sporting Images in Black and White: Race in Newspaper Coverage of the 2000 Olympic Games. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 15(4), 211–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170490521176>
- Hill Collins, P. (2002). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Rev. 10th anniversary ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203900055>
- hooks, bell. (2014). *Ain't I a Woman : Black Women and Feminism* (2nd edition.). Taylor and Francis, an imprint of Routledge.
- hooks, bell. (2014). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black..* In *Routledge eBooks*.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743134>
- Hull, K., Walker, D., Romney, M., & Pellizzaro, K. (2022). “Through Our Prism”: Black Television Sports Journalists’ Work Experiences and Interactions with Black Athletes. *Journalism Practice*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print), 1–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2022.2050468>
- Hundley, H. L., & Billings, A. C. (2010). *Examining identity in sports media*. Sage Publications.
- Jones, M. S. (2007). *All bound up together the woman question in African American public culture, 1830-1900*. University of North Carolina Press.

- Landgrebe, L. (2022). Exploring Body Image at the Intersection of Racial, Gender & Sport Identities: Giving Voice to Black Female Athletes' Experiences. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. [LandgrebeLindseyResearch.pdf \(umsystem.edu\)](#)
- Magrath, R. (2022). Athlete Activism: Contemporary Perspectives (1st ed., Vol. 1). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003140290>
- Messner, M. A. (2002). Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports (NED-New edition, Vol. 4, pp. xxii–xxii). University of Minnesota Press.
- Mitchell, I., Evans, L., Rees, T., & Hardy, L. (2014). Stressors, social support, and tests of the buffering hypothesis: Effects on psychological responses of injured athletes. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 19(3), 486–508. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12046>
- Moody-Ramirez, M. (2017). Gender and Black Feminist Theory: Examining Difference. *The Routledge Companion to Media and Race* (pp. 301–315). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315778228-36>
- Owens, E., E. B., & McArthur, S. A. (2018). Black Women Researchers' Path to Breaking Silence: Three Scholars Reflect on Voicing Oppression, Self-reflexive Speech, and Talking Back to Elite Discourses. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 42(3-4), 125–135.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2012). Without you, I'm nothing: performances of the self on Twitter. *International Journal of Communication (Online)*, 1989-2006.
- Raney, A. A., & Bryant, J. (2006). Handbook of Sports and Media (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203873670>

Razack, & Joseph, J. (2021). Misogynoir in women's sport media: race, nation, and diaspora in the representation of Naomi Osaka. *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(2), 291–308.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720960919>

Richard, G. T., & Gray, K. L. (2018). Gendered Play, Racialized Reality Black Cyberfeminism, Inclusive Communities of Practice, and the Intersections of Learning, Socialization, and Resilience in Online Gaming. *Frontiers (Boulder)*, 39(1), 112–148.

<https://doi.org/10.5250/fronjwomestud.39.1.0112>

Scott, K. D. (2021). Repurposing Black Women's Strength and Normalizing "Strong Sista Self-Care" on Social Media. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 44(4), 484–490.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2021.1987823>

Simien, E. M., Arinze, N., & McGarry, J. (2019). A Portrait of Marginality in Sport and Education: Toward a Theory of Intersectionality and Raced-Gendered Experiences for Black Female College Athletes. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 40(3), 409–427.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2019.1614865>

Singh, N. (2023, December 11). *Once confessed to attempt suicide, Sha'carri Richardson clears out negative thoughts before 2024 season*. EssentiallySports.

<https://www.essentiallysports.com/us-sports-news-track-and-field-news-once-confessed-to-attempt-suicide-shacarri-richardson-clears-out-negative-thoughts-before-twenty-twenty-four-season/>

Smith, E. (1993). Race, Sport, and the American University. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 17(3), 206–212.

- Smrdelj, R., & Pajnik, M. (2022). Intersectional representation in online media discourse: reflecting anti-discrimination position in reporting on same-sex partnerships. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 26(3), 463–484.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09718524.2022.2144100>
- Spivak, G. C. (2023). Can the subaltern speak?. In *Imperialism* (pp. 171-219). Routledge.
- Sullivan, J. M., Winburn, J., & Cross, W. E. (2018). Dimensions of blackness : racial identity and political beliefs. State University of New York Press.
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (2004). Posttraumatic Growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(1), 1–18.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1501_01
- TODAY. (2021, July 2). *Exclusive: Sha'carri Richardson speaks out about failed drug test*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJYC7Ju-Y8>
- Toffoletti, K., & Thorpe, H. (2018). Female athletes' self-representation on social media: A feminist analysis of neoliberal marketing strategies in “economies of visibility.” *Feminism & Psychology*, 28(1), 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353517726705>
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>
- Velloso, C. (2022). Angry Gymnastics: Representations of Simone Biles at the 2019 National and World Championships. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 33(5), 492–513.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2022.2053899>

- Vomer, R. P., & York, E. L. (2022). It's high time for a change. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 56(22), 1267–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2022-106105>
- Wiggins, D. K. (2014). “Black Athletes in White Men’s Games”: Race, Sport and American National Pastimes. *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31(1–2), 181–202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2013.857313>
- Williams, A. L., Schweinbenz, A., & Pegoraro, A. (2023). The Switch Up: BlackCrit, The Heritage, and the Wave of Athletic Racial Capitalism. *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086231217198>
- Worrell, F. C., Vandiver, B. J., & Fhagen, P. E. (2023). Nigrescence Theory From 1971 to 2021: The Critical Contributions of William E. Cross, Jr. *The American Psychologist*, 78(4), 389–400. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0001052>