

STRIDES

The Race to Racial Equity
in Sport



MA ADVERTISING

UAL: LONDON COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION

RORY COLEMAN

to Mike, Siobhan, Kate and John

CONTENTS

4

the warmup

8

a jog through time

27

training sessions

36

see how they run

46

the main event

64

the last lap

INTRODUCTION

the warmup

BACKGROUND

This project was born out of the desire to understand the discrepancies in racial representation between professional and amateur/casual athletes, specifically in running. While some of the most famous sprinters and distance runners in Britain are Black, many running communities across the UK remain predominantly White.

Additionally, as a mixed race runner myself, I was struck at the lack of diversity in running clubs around London. Running clubs are having a moment in the UK this year, with the latest boom being heavily reported on, but why is it that these spaces continue to (at least appear) segregated?

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

There are many reasons for these disparities, but many of these are not problems that can be solved through creative advertising. Ultimately, I spoke to Black people who are already running for fun, to see what they overcame and what inspired them to lace up their trainers when their friends and families were more than likely not doing the same.

I focused in further on those between 25 and 40, and who identify as female. I wanted to understand what they enjoy about running and the role it plays in their lives to develop an evolved proposal for cultural marketing specific to the athletic Black female population. This work will be of importance to any brand hoping to develop an emotional and financial connection with this subset of runners.

“The London Marathon is the largest marathon event in the UK, with more than 40,000 people taking part in 2022. **However, 89% of participants were White, and only 1.18% of participants were from a Black background.**”

SKY SPORTS

“**Black people don’t run unless it's from danger, from the police, or getting paid millions of dollars to run in the Olympics.**”

MARTINUS EVANS

AUTHORS' NOTE

I have elected to use capital letters when referring to racial categories, per the American Psychological Association's [style guide](#), and supported by Kwame Anthony Appiah's opinion piece in the Atlantic, "[The Case for Capitalizing the B in Black](#)".

“Racial identities were not discovered but created... we must all take responsibility for them. Don’t let them disguise themselves as common nouns and adjectives.”

Kwame Anthony Appiah

A group of runners is captured from behind as they jog across a bridge. The runners are wearing athletic gear, including tank tops and shorts, with race bibs attached to their backs. The bib numbers visible are 20, F14, F29, F15, and F27. The bridge has a metal railing. In the background, a large body of water is visible, with a city skyline featuring several prominent skyscrapers under a cloudy sky. A large ship is also visible on the water to the left.

A JOG THROUGH TIME

reviewing the literature



MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF BLACK ATHLETES

Historically, Black people have been portrayed in British advertisements, but often within narrowly defined roles as service people, criminals, or elite sports figures (ASA, 2022).

This emphasis reflects a broader trend in media, where

Black individuals are disproportionately associated with physical excellence rather than intellectual or creative pursuits.

Hackney-born Rugby player Martin Offiah told Campaign in 2020 that his successes on the pitch “are often attributed to my speed rather than my intellect and problem-solving brain” (Readman, 2020). The Journal of Sport and Social issues published findings that TV coverage of English Football matches lauded White players for “psychological characteristics” and Black players for their “physicality” (McCarthy and Jones, 1997).

This pervasive stereotype also exists in worldwide, particularly in sports such as American football, athletics, and boxing (Rasmussen et al., 2005).

A report in the Howard Journal of Communications reviewed language used to describe quarterbacks in the U.S. National Football League (NFL) and found that **racist stereotypes were unmistakable**. While White quarterbacks were described as mentally sharper, the Black quarterbacks were lauded for their athletic abilities. The language used when describing these Black athletes has not been overtly racist in recent years.

However, the outcomes of this commentary have led to subconscious audience, coaching, and even player acceptance of these stereotypes – that Black players are not as smart and White players are not as physically gifted (Mercurio and Filak, 2010; McCall, 2020).



Is it surprising that advertisements perpetuate these views? **It shouldn't be.** A [2022 ASA census](#) of UK advertisers found that “just 1% of high-ranking senior executive roles are held by Black people.” This matters because, as Dark Horses strategist Matt Readman puts it, “the best and worst of how we deal with race as a society is exaggerated in sport” (Campaign, 2020). When asked about differences in the media’s language used to describe players of White vs. Black backgrounds, White respondents were less likely to be able to identify the prejudices (McCarthy and Jones and Potrak, 2003). Because there are few Black advertising executives, **companies are at risk of creating inauthentic ads targeted at Black consumers.**

As Marcus Ryder MBE, a self-described “ordinary” Black runner observed, marketing strategies frequently target Black individuals as elite athletes, often neglecting everyday sports participation. He critiques this narrow focus, arguing that “taking part in a race has almost nothing to do with the position you finish or the time you complete it in” (Ryder, 2013). This gap in marketing **perpetuates the stereotype** that sports for Black communities revolve exclusively around competition and achievement, rather than wellness, enjoyment, or community building. While social issues limit all Black athletes, additional factors come into play when the discussion turns to women. More than just biases related to innate physical advantages, “Black sportswomen are often **victims of predetermined social roles**, perceived as more aggressive and closer to masculinity than their White counterparts, leading to greater marginalisation” (Mogaji and Nguyen 2023).



Bany Black runners have spoken on this issue. Matilda Egere-Cooper, founder of 'Fly Girl Collective' a UK-based fitness community aimed at Black women, said in Runners World UK that "The marketing around (running) doesn't exactly show Black women doing half marathons, or full marathons for that matter." She's aiming to encourage Black women to join her through her non-competitive approach which "has the benefit of being good for runners' mental as well as physical health" (Glennon, 2020).

But according to the founders of Emancipated Run Crew, another UK-based diversity-minded running collective, "You can't retrofit something that was designed with White people in mind just by putting our faces on the adverts" (Smyth, 2024). So how can something made for 'White people' in practice through clubs, races, or community events become a place where Black women feel encouraged and accepted, allowed to be themselves without fear of judgment?

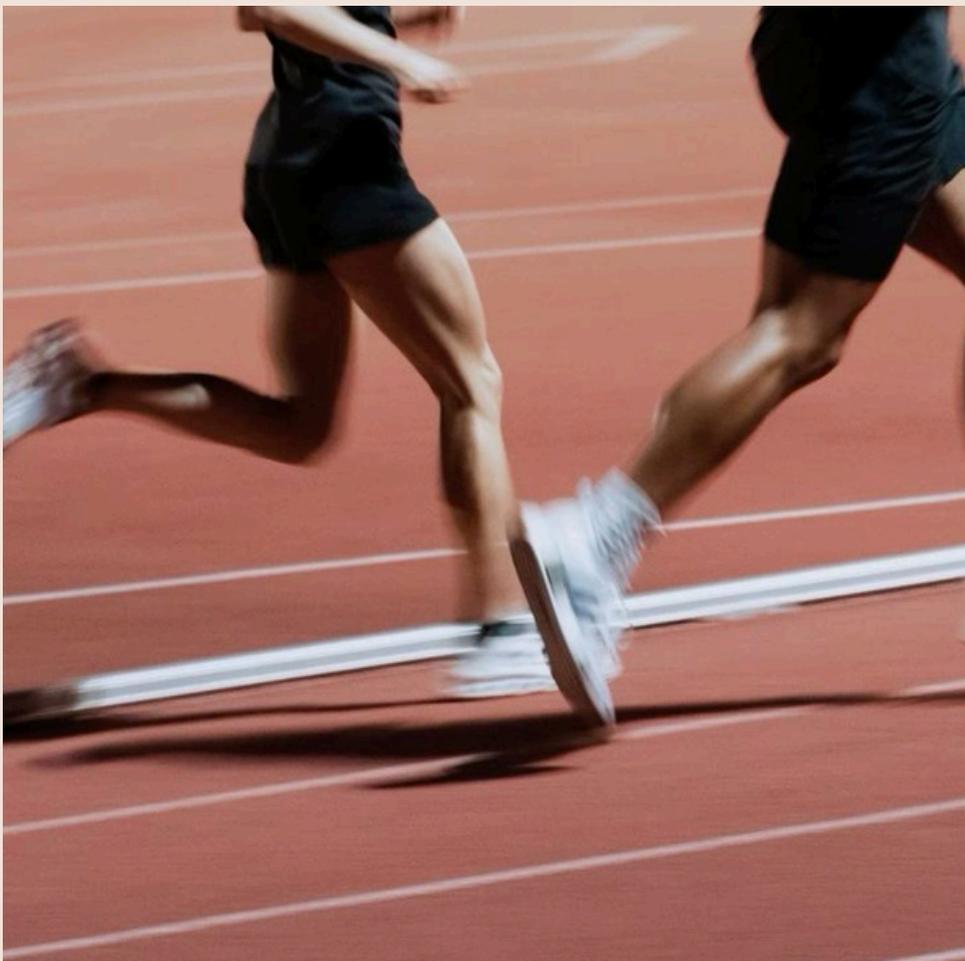
The effectiveness of sports marketing targeting Black audiences has so far depended on authenticity and cultural resonance – principles likely applicable to many (if not all) audiences. The work of Safiya Umoja Noble (Algorithms of Oppression) underscores the importance of respecting diverse consumer needs, highlighting that companies must "pay attention to the needs of people of colour and demonstrate respect for consumers by offering services to communities of colour just as is done for most everyone else" (Noble, 2018). Research out of the Stockholm School of Economics verifies this, noting that "when mindfully portrayed, ethnic diversity advertising can generate effects that are positive for brands" (Åkestam, 2017).

Additionally, the repetitive focus on elite athletes overlooks the diversity within Black communities. Campaigns like *This Girl Can* have made strides in promoting inclusivity but often fall short of adequately representing Black women in casual or amateur sports. This absence reinforces the perception that sports marketing is tailored for a predominantly White audience.

This is not to say that the media landscape is devoid of messages to amateur and casual athletes. Nike's 2021 'Play New' global campaign aimed to tackle exactly this – showing professionals trying (and failing at) sports that aren't their forté. With Black British sprinter Dina Asher-Smith swinging a golf club, and athletes young and slightly-less-young attempting new athletic feats, the spot features a VO encouraging the audience to try new things even though it won't be easy and it may be ugly. The message is exactly what the conversation around sport, especially from Nike, was missing. The trouble is, it was the only one of its kind, and the brand has in 2024 transitioned back to stories of what set outstanding and exceptional athletes apart (Nike, 2024). Out of eighteen featured athletes in this year's promotional film, eleven are Black – not a number reflective of the 13.7% of the US population that is Black or the roughly 4% of Brits who identify as Black (U.S. Census Bureau 2023; ONS 2022).

This is in line with the ASA’s findings on racial representation in UK TV adverts – noting that “In trying to avoid accusations of racism and offence, advertisers have simply gone to the other extreme and portray a racial mix that in no way represents the actual ethnic make-up of the UK” (ASA, 2022). But ultimately, the population of Black Brits and Black Americans continues to grow, making this a market segment an area of growing concern for advertisers (Madadi, 2024). **Is there a balance** to be struck which represents Black people in truthful contexts, at the exactly proportionate level, that would also be in line with a brand’s goals to connect through emotional or aspirational means with their consumers?

While there has been progress to the accuracy of media portrayals of Black athletes, this project endeavours to provide impetus for additional research and deeper understanding, predominantly for utilisation with female runners.





**LOYALTY AND BRAND AFFINITIES
WITH BLACK CONSUMERS**

The interplay between representation, identity, and consumer sentiment has made the study of brand loyalty with minority groups a point of interest within academic and industry literature. This review examines key findings on how ethnically-targeted advertising influences consumer-brand relationships, self-identity, and brand affinity namely with Black British audiences.

Ethnically targeted advertisements have been central to fostering brand loyalty among Black and minority consumers. Research highlights that such ads are effective because they provide cultural cues, enabling individuals to identify with the content and actors portrayed. As Madadi et al. (2024) observe, “ethnically targeted ads present cues which allow viewers to distinguish themselves from others, thereby strengthening their own self-identity and sense of distinction.” This reinforces an emotional connection between consumers and brands, particularly for those with strong ethnic identification. This research was investigated through the theoretical frameworks of Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), specifically to understand Black consumer brand relationships and consumer attitudes depending on the service or product in question.

SIT, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1978), posits that consumer behaviours adapt based on how people perceive and categorize themselves. ELM, via Petty and Cacioppo (1986), helps us understand how these consumers decipher information (advertising or otherwise), taking into account source, message, channel and settings. There are two routes through which ELM is observed, the central and the peripheral, the former generally involving higher consumer thought and consideration, and the latter requiring less focus.

Social Categorization:
People categorize themselves and others into groups, such as race, gender, or profession.

Social Comparison:
Groups are compared to boost self-esteem, often leading to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination.

Social Identification:
Individuals adopt the identity of the group they categorize themselves into, aligning with its norms and values.

Research indicates that African Americans respond differently to advertisements compared to their White counterparts. This underscores the importance of marketers diversifying their strategies to better engage these audiences and elicit positive responses (Smith, 2022; Jones, 2010). Studies grounded in Social Identity Theory reveal that individuals with a strong sense of ethnic identity exhibit more favourable behaviours, such as heightened brand loyalty, compared to those with weaker ethnic identification (Sierra et al., 2009; Zúñiga, 2015).

Through the ELM lens as well, the context in which advertisements are displayed – such as in magazines or in-store promotions – can significantly influence how consumers respond to ethnically targeted advertisements (Madadi, 2024). In accordance with this model, research indicates that Black consumers with strong ethnic identities showed a preference for print advertisements featuring Black female models over those with White models. These preferences correlated with more favorable behaviors toward the brand being advertised (Green, 1999).

BRAND LOYALTY



Research conducted for the Advertising Standards Authority found strong consensus among participants across the UK that modern advertising should reflect inclusivity by featuring diverse racial and ethnic groups in both representation and narrative (Ellis & Myers-Lamptey, 2021). Fortunately, studies have also shown that consumers who are aware of a brand's efforts to tailor advertisements to their ethnic group are more likely to recall and respond positively to those ads. These positive responses often extend to the brand itself, fostering more favorable brand attitudes (Sierra and Hyman and Heiser, 2012). These studies collectively underscore the critical importance of intentional, culturally sensitive advertising strategies to effectively engage diverse audiences and foster positive brand relationships.

“When there is an audience spending £2.7 billion every year on Health and Beauty products, demonstrating that they want to spend their money with businesses on their high street, why on Earth would brands not want a slice of that pie? The Black Pound Report is helping businesses to understand the value of inclusion in the products they create, stock and market.”

Lydia Amoah, Creator and publisher of the Black Pound Report

Before making brand positioning decisions that will impact future earnings, a look at the fiscal future of the Black consumer is essential. In Afua Hirsch's seminal text "Brit(ish): On Race, Identity, and Belonging" she reports that "63 percent of mixed brits with Black heritage consider skin colour an important factor of their lives" underlining the opportunity of meaningful connection with this particular minority group, who feel strongly connected to their ethnic background (Hirsch, 2018, p.154). However, ethnic tensions in the nation continue to bubble under the surface posing a threat to these possible earnings.

Reports have recently emerged on the future of the Black consumer in the UK. In a survey of over 1,600 minority Brits aged 16-34, 66% reported wanting to leave the UK due to racism, politics, and the cost of living crisis (Sadé and Shabbir, 2024). This could mean the loss of £4.5 billion in Black and ethnic minority consumers' annual disposable income (The Black Pound Report, 2022). Many are citing the hostile discourse around immigration in the 2024 election as their "tipping point."

So what does this mean for Black female runners in the UK?

They are part of these groups which are proven to be loyal to brands that portray them effectively and make an effort to understand and contribute to their culture. But they are also part of the groups which are not feeling financially stable or welcome in Britain and may even aspire to leave. These cultural cues are important in assessing the role brands can play in their lives – if any role at all. But the financial opportunities are great if done so productively.



RUNNING AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY

There are many reasons for people to head out and pound the pavement, in some cases more-so for Black consumers wanting to improve their physical and mental health. The UK government reports that almost 30% of Black women have experienced a “common mental disorder in the past week” which is 8.4% higher than White women and 15.8% higher than Black men (NHS England, 2016).

The COVID 19 and subsequent cost of living crises have likely only made the mental and emotional health outcomes of Black women worse in the intervening 8 years (Cardoso et al., 2024).

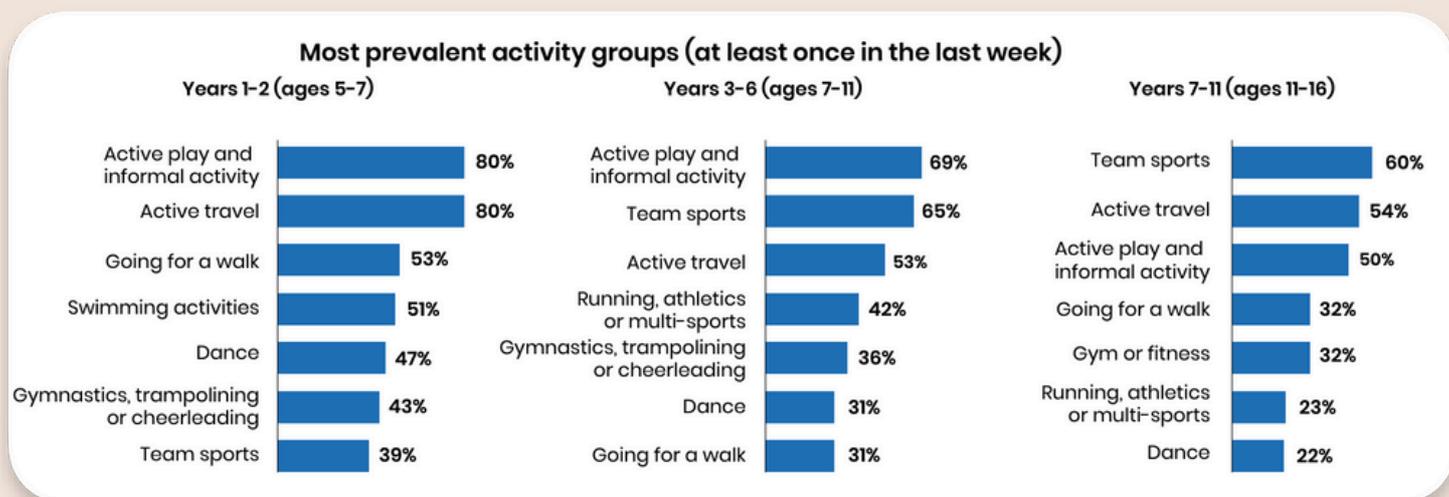
Additionally, research has indicated that certain ethnic groups in England face a disproportionately high risk of abdominal obesity compared to the general population. Among others, Black African women and Black Caribbean women in the UK are cited as exhibiting greater susceptibility to this health condition (Higgins, Nazroo, and Brown, 2019).

In fact, the UK government reports that in 2022 over 70% of Black adults “were overweight or living with obesity” which was “the highest percentage out of all ethnic groups” (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2024). Cardiovascular exercises, like running, are well-known to combat obesity-related health issues (Raimen et al., 2023), however, there are a few obstacles in the way when it comes to Black Brits’ involvement in the sport.

London is renowned for its rich racial and cultural diversity, with its streets alive with the sound of multiple languages and the presence of various cultural influences. However, this celebrated multiculturalism does not seem to be fully reflected in the running community. While many Black and other people of colour do participate in running, their underrepresentation in media and promotional materials suggests that they may not feel entirely included or visible within this space (Khouv, 2020). Emancipated Run Crew (ERC) founders noted in a recent Runners World article that “even the Hackney Half, years ago, was **just so White**. One of the most diverse places in the UK – it was astounding” (Smyth, 2024).

Sport England reported in 2020 that “presently, 62% of adults in England currently meet the Chief Medical Officer’s guidelines of 150 minutes of physical activity a week. However, just 56% of Black people reach this figure.” In 2024 this was clarified further, with findings that 44% of Brits who have “two or more” inequality factors (like minority race, disability, parental status, and lower socio-economic status) are failing to meet activity guidelines, whereas 3 in 4 adults with zero inequality factors are meeting them. In children and young people, being a girl is also included as an inequality factor.

While the annual report for 2024 has not yet been published, in 2023 activity levels for Black children aged 5-16 were 10% lower than for White British children of the same age group (Sport England, 2023). The table from Sport England below indicates that running, athletics and multi-sports are dropping by nearly 20% between Years 3-6 and Years 7-11, with either little introduction or infrequent uptake in Years 1-2.



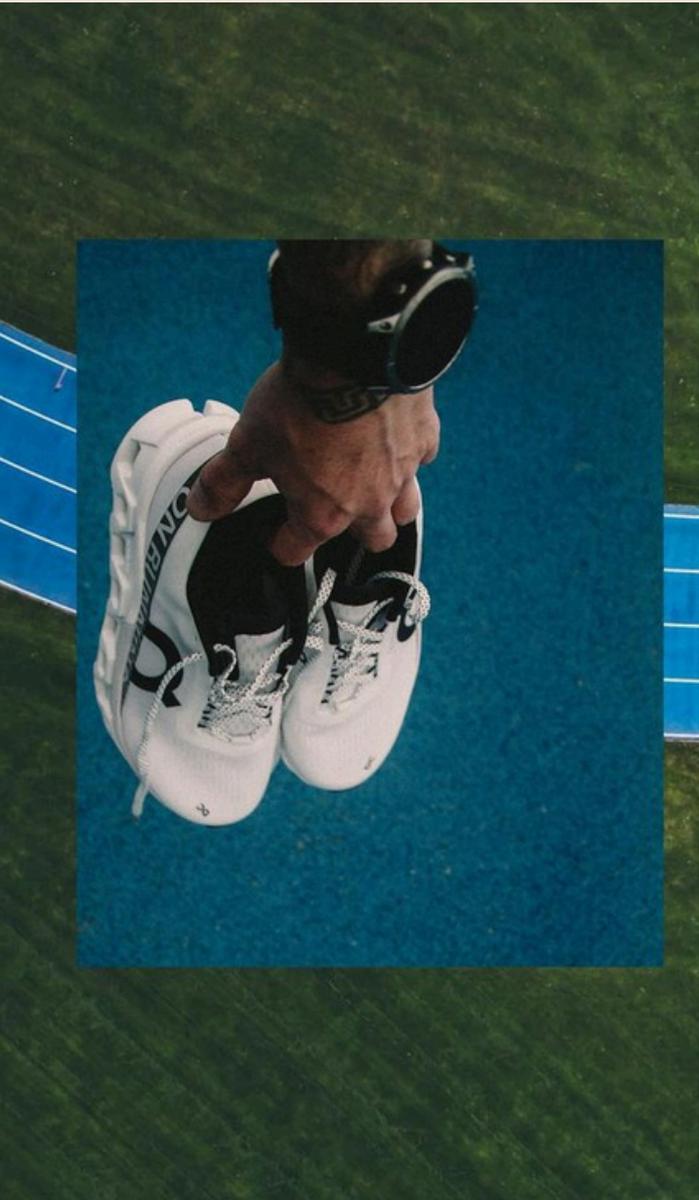
England Athletics, the governing body for the sport of athletics in England, addresses these disparities in their long-term strategic plan from 2021, noting “Less affluent communities, women, disabled people and people from ethnically diverse communities have the lowest activity levels” and committing to strengthening the sport by making it “appealing to all communities” (England Athletics, 2021). Their plans are to diversify coaching staff, removing barriers for registration, and establishing a charitable foundation “to improve access to track and field athletics for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds” (England Athletics, 2021). But if running is (essentially) free of cost, why are there still access issues?

Looking at Team GB from the Tokyo 2020 Olympics can illuminate some differences between these athletes and the average Brit. Huck Magazine found that 35% of Team GB medal winners went through some form of private education, despite less than 7% of the UK population being privately educated, illuminating a large wealth gap. Sadly, it seems that there is a “two-tier system” offering more opportunities for success and resource access to those whose families can afford it (Young, 2024). And overall sporting participation has dropped in the UK since the ‘home games’ in London in 2012, despite increases to funding.

“We see a split along traditional lines in the sports where non-Whites in the UK perform at an elite level – mostly in more accessible and culturally accepted sports like track and field, basketball and boxing” (Young, 2024).

Another part of the issue is that **only 2% of Black people in Britain live outside of cities** – meaning a staggering 98% are in urban areas (Ware, 2015). Without access to trails and large parks, and with safety concerns of young people running around urban areas due to traffic or crime, many would miss the opportunity to begin with jogging as a hobby or means of destressing.

On top of all of this, many would-be runners point to the issue as a perception problem.



Marcus Ryder MBE highlights that cultural barriers play a significant role in Black people's underrepresentation in marathons. He suggests that the lack of visible Black participation in running clubs creates "barriers" that are "cultural and self-perpetuating". And running groups which are designed by Black individuals attract a disproportionately high number of Black runners, leaving these communities segregated (Ryder, 2013). The founders of ERC, quoted above, also note that there's a wide-held assumption that "lots of Black people run because they're seen at the Olympics, but **at the grassroots level we aren't there** and it's still not viewed as a space where we should be" (Smyth, 2024).

“Running just for the fun of it, well, that was something White people did.”

Ashley Lauretta, [Womens Running](#)



TRAINING SESSIONS



In order to form a novel interpretation of my selected audience, my mission was clear: determine which ways the landscape of Black athlete lived experiences has shifted from the existing literature, and view this through an intersectional lens when female identity is involved.

To develop my understanding of these firsthand experiences, I spoke to three Black and female-identifying individuals aged 25-35 over the course of two in-depth interviews. I also attended social running clubs (with no particular self-categorisation, for example women-only, POC-only, or queer-identifying only), in order to observe from within the group the dynamics of attendees. And lastly, I engaged in social listening, analysing discussions online between members of this audience.

Each of the individuals I interviewed had unique relationships to running, some engaging in it more than others, which provided a breadth of experiences to learn from. These differing approaches to running led to different interview questions and insights, but a few common themes emerged. The women also all came from different backgrounds, but shared an interesting characteristic – each of their mothers had been immigrants. One from Dominica in the Caribbean, another from the U.S.A (African-American) and the last from Nigeria. While all women identified as Black, the manifestations of their differing matrilineal cultures were bound to provide more intersectional considerations in their beliefs and behaviours.

The women I spoke with are artistic directors, Doctorate students, and in clean energy development. They have one sibling, no siblings, or six. They either have loved sport all their lives, or they have come to it recently. Some thrive off pressure and competition, others only want to compete with the version of themselves they were yesterday. This variety in lifestyles created a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives that shaped their approach to sport and life. Their unique journeys highlighted how diverse influences—cultural, familial, and personal—can converge to create distinct pathways to success and fulfilment. This mosaic of stories underscored the beauty of individuality within shared passions, illustrating how sport can be both a unifier and a platform for self-expression. Self-expression, especially in the context of Black female athletes, became another theme we explored at length.

My next task was to unravel these stories to develop empathy maps and begin my prototypes.



MAPPING THE AUDIENCE

they think and feel:

- Running makes them feel mentally strong as well as physically
- They like the flexibility of running whenever fits their schedules
- Motivation isn't always easy, but becomes muscle memory

they see:

- Their progress (more quickly than in other hobbies/pursuits)
- Eurocentric beauty and body standards
- Workouts on social media
- Their mothers preferring more gentle kinds of movement
- People of all ages running

MAPPING THE AUDIENCE

they hear:

- Exercising improves longevity
- About their friends getting more involved in running recently
- That women aren't safe running at night

they say and do:

- Purchase exercise clothes/shoes which are affordable
- Establish workout routines when they can
- Avoid workouts around when they need to be "presentable"

PROTOTYPING

The themes I wanted to revisit with my participants included fitness as a break from structure, hair and clothing as mediums of self expression, and the intrinsic intersectionality of sex and race. With each woman's individual relationship with running, the stimulus we discussed the longest shifted slightly.

To dive deeper into a break from structure, I wanted to have my participants reevaluate this as a priority for them – is this something they *really* saw as extremely valuable? I presented a scenario where there were generous rewards from SheaMoisture (a Black haircare brand we had discussed as a favourite of theirs) for following a daily workout regimen including times and locations. In exchange for a rigorous weeklong exercise plan, participants would receive products. We also discussed what kind of incentives would get them to agree to this, given they would have to sacrifice the usual flexibility going on runs allowed them.

In order to investigate hair and clothes as a means of self expression, we talked about different product developments which SheaMoisture could undertake to meet the needs of Black athletes – dry shampoos, headbands, SPF sun cream that doesn't leave a white cast on dark skin. We also discussed the brand branching out into clothing and debuting a line of clothes which would dispel the previously discussed misconceptions about Black athletes being inherently stronger and faster than their White counterparts.

PROTOTYPING

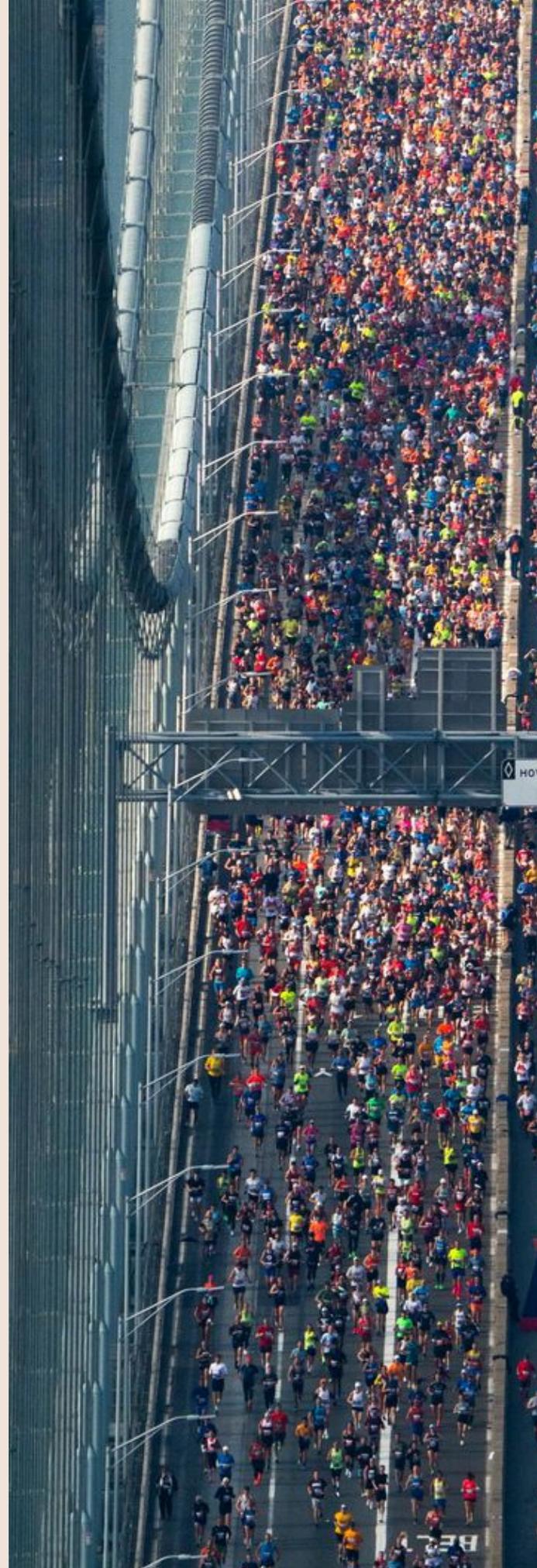


image generated with ChatGPT

And lastly, to form additional insights around both Black and female identities, we discussed the community aspects of exercise – running clubs, workout classes, and even engaging in these with family or colleagues. This stimulus was a SheaMoisture run club, where Black women in the area would be invited to come to a non-competitive and relaxed beginners running group. Groups like this already exist, so it wasn't difficult to imagine, but the thought experiment did get us talking more about notions of safety, community, camaraderie, pressure, and obligation/motivation. A tech component was also discussed, where members would be able to compare stats on their fitness watches to those in the group or those who would qualify to be part of the group but aren't.

In the final phase of data collection, the emphasis was on thick data. The concept of thick data has been popularized by social scientist Tricia Wang, who emphasizes its role in complementing high volumes of data by providing deep qualitative insights into human behavior and cultural contexts. Wang argued that thick data bridges the gap between numbers and narratives, helping organizations understand the "why" behind consumer decision making and patterns.

The second round of conversations I had with participants confirmed that this group could not possibly be distilled to a singular set of beliefs and behaviours. Each prototype elicited different responses and different tangential conversations. These results could never be conclusive, but did provide a thick data set with which to develop some additional learnings and principles.



FURTHER EXPLORATION



In the first set of interviews, when discussing their perception of their roles in communities including their cultural group, the trending topic of running clubs came up, inspiring the SheaMoisture prototype. Part of my research approach was to attend some of these meetings and training sessions myself, so I had formed some opinions on the experience as a biracial woman and was curious to hear the impressions of the Black women I met with – if they would, or ever have, attend(ed), why or why not, and what could make it a community they would commit to being part of, knowing the many benefits of belonging to these kinds of groups?

Each woman also touched on her relationship to her hair and its impact on her self-expression. Black and afro hair has historically been and continues to be extremely culturally significant. This transcended the differences in the countries of origin of their Black mothers and was no small part of each of their identities. With this in mind, we dove deeper into how Black hair can be both a medium of expression and a limiting factor when it comes to developing a relationship with running – starting with an evaluation of opportunity for popular ethnic hair care brand SheaMoisture (featured in the hypothetical running club discussion).

FURTHER EXPLORATION

An aerial photograph of five sprinters in various colored uniforms (green, yellow, blue, black, and red) running on a blue track with white lane markings. The runners are captured in mid-stride, moving from the top-left towards the bottom-right of the frame. The text 'SEE HOW THEY RUN' is overlaid in large white letters, following the diagonal path of the runners.

SEE HOW THEY RUN

*cultural & contextual
analysis*

When asked what the barriers to getting into running currently are, Hamid Vaghefian, head of community engagement at London Marathon said, "The obvious thing is cost, access and motivation" (Freeman-Powell, 2023). These barriers have been discussed in the prevailing literature on Black Brits' running habits, but what are the less obvious obstacles?



Interview participants repeatedly brought up Black and afro hair when discussing barriers to entry to the running world – some women stating that their hair is as intrinsic to the Black experience as their skin colour. Milan Crawford, the Head of Social at textured hair care brand SheaMoisture, summed it up perfectly saying “for Black women, for people with textured hair, it’s a BOND. Your hair is a part of you, it’s a bond you pour into constantly, it’s **bonds that are passed through generations**, from your grandmother, your mother, your community, your friends” (Boardroom Beauty Podcast, 2024). Curly, kinky, or coily hair has proven to be an obstacle for women when they want to workout.

Dermatological research has shown that “nearly 40%” of Black women “avoid exercise at times owing to hair-related issues” (Hall et al., 2013). Findings in the Journal of Exercise and Nutrition have also reported that populations of Black women with natural hair are mindful of the need to lose weight, yet only 15% are exercising to address this concern (Mbilishaka and Lacey, 2019). Solutions include wearing natural and protective hairstyles like braids and cornrows, as these have “been identified by African American women as a way to increase the frequency and intensity of exercise behaviors” (Mbilishaka and Lacey, 2019).

Black hair has unique properties that can interfere with the ease of exercising whenever and wherever. “Afro hair is naturally drier than other hair because it has fewer cell layers” (Evans, 2021). And it’s a social issue too – which the interviewees touched on. The Dove CROWN study found “that Black women were 1.5 times more likely than non-Black women to respond that they have been sent home from work in the past because of their hair” (JOY Collective, 2020). However, psychologists have also discovered that African American women who embrace their natural hair often experience greater self-efficacy compared to those who opt for chemical hair straightening. (Mbilishaka and Lacey, 2019).

Fortunately, products to support Black women who choose to wear their hair naturally (as opposed to treated with relaxers or heat straightening treatments, which produce more eurocentric styles) are becoming more available – like trailblazer brand SheaMoisture.

CULTURE & CONTEXT

SheaMoisture is a hair and skin care brand known for using natural, ethically sourced ingredients, particularly shea butter, and for catering to textured and multicultural hair. It was founded in 1991 by Richelieu Dennis, inspired by his grandmother Sofi Tucker, who sold handmade shea butter products in Sierra Leone in the early 1900s. The brand emphasises inclusivity, self-care, and community empowerment, supporting causes like economic advancement for women of colour. Acquired by Unilever in 2017, SheaMoisture remains a leading brand for natural hair care.

Nearly 25 years after its founding, SheaMoisture products are widely available in drugstores, pharmacies, beauty supply shops, and specialty stores. The brand is strongly associated with Black women embracing their natural curly, kinky, or coily hair without chemical straightening but has also gained popularity across diverse consumer groups (Giorgis, 2015). They are also vocally committed to financially empowering the Black community, and in 2022 had donated \$10 million in “grants, educational programmes, partnerships and donations” to “provide economic opportunities for underserved and under-represented business owners” (Unilever, 2022).



CULTURE & CONTEXT

SheaMoisture has the ability to expand its influence by addressing the lifestyle and wellness concerns of casual athletes with natural hair without sacrificing its core mission – empowerment of Black women. The current landscape of sport marketing often neglects Black women's dual concerns of fitness and haircare. While some fitness brands promote inclusivity in body types and abilities, few connect directly with haircare solutions – a significant barrier for Black women in sports participation. While haircare is about looking good, running is about feeling good – but these shouldn't be in opposition with one another. SheaMoisture can differentiate itself by integrating haircare into a broader wellness narrative, targeting this niche.

Easier natural hair care can benefit these women beyond allowing them to develop exercise regimens. As Mbilishaka and Lacey have proven through their findings on Black women's wellbeing, it really is a win-win for Shea to increase its share of voice through this lens.

However, brands like SheaMoisture should be careful to maintain their direct connection to the Black community. In 2017 when Unilever acquired SheaMoisture, they lost some of their customer's favour. On the one hand, consumers were frustrated with the lack of availability of natural hair care products on a national scale, in shops other than in urban centres. But when SheaMoisture's founders sold the brand, their loyal buyers were disappointed.

While the distribution of the product was able to expand due to the acquisition, the brand was no longer *for* Black people *by* Black people, in their view. They now have a 2.8/5 on [Trust Pilot](#) (as of 01 Dec 2024) and while their competitors like Cantu or Camille Rose have far fewer reviews, their ratings are higher.

CULTURE & CONTEXT

Shea has not had a controversial past, but their most noticeable misstep was an advertisement in 2017 which featured a handful of women sporting their hairdos, but only one was Black. The team shared a “swift and blunt apology” recognising that offense and stating that the perceived abandonment of the Black demographic was not intentional, and something they deeply regretted (Payne and Duster, 2017). As time has passed, this has largely disappeared from conversations online about Shea.

SheaMoisture has a business problem here, as the company can no longer rely on its pioneer status and relative scarcity to maintain its relationship with its target demographic. There are now more choices than ever when it comes to Black hair care. According to Stylist, “The Black hair industry is worth an estimated £88 million, with Black women spending six times more on hair care than their White counterparts” (Chabo, 2019).

Fortunately, SheaMoisture can re-emerge as a pioneer brand by tapping into the “stronger-than-usual level of perceived investment and ownership” that Black consumers felt towards them, and incorporating a wellness and health aspect into their messaging (Robles, 2017). And as noted before, consumers with strong ethnic identification often respond favorably to brands addressing their specific needs and that ethnically targeted advertising strengthens consumer self-identity and brand connection (Madadi, 2024; Sierra, Hyman and Heiser, 2012).

One of Shea’s competitors in the UK market, Bouclème, provides hair solutions on their blog for all sorts of scenarios like pregnancy, seasonal changes, prolonged sun exposure, and wedding styles. Yet out of 62 articles, none address running, sweating scalp or more direct exercise-related solutions (Bouclème, 2024). There is an unmet need.



CULTURE & CONTEXT

It took until 2021 for a Black woman to represent Team GB at the Olympics in swimming, and another year for a swim cap made for women with “braids, locs, or afro hair” to be approved for worldwide competition (Soulcap, 2022). So there is still progress to be made in Black women’s sport, and Shea can position themselves as a large part of it. SheaMoisture could reignite their audience of Black consumers by selling more than haircare – by selling inspiration to pursue athletic hobbies despite historical and social patterns which have limited them.



CASE STUDY

Let's look at Nike's 2018 endorsement of Colin Kaepernick as an example of a path forward for SheaMoisture. Kaepernick, the Black NFL player who would kneel during the U.S. National Anthem, was protesting in response to police killings of African Americans. Nike turned him into their poster man. This marketing decision was hotly debated, and the brand did see short term negative consequences. Angry tweets from U.S. President Donald Trump emboldened users to cut the iconic "swoosh" out of their Nike products, burn their shoes, and boycott the brand (Kelner, 2018). Their stock fell by 3% as a small minority took out their frustrations at Kaepernick's disrespect. Critics did argue that Nike was exploiting activism for profit rather than making genuine systemic changes; and the ubiquitousness of the brand did allow for this level of risk to be taken when it seemed at first to be a very unpopular choice. But ultimately, it proved to be a huge success – Nike did not underestimate the public's empathy for those suffering racially motivated injustices. In 2020, two years after the campaign ran and in the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement's upswing worldwide, The Athletic reported that the Kaepernick partnership was, based on polling, "an even bigger success" (Kaplan, 2020).



SheaMoisture already has a reputation for championing inclusivity, representation, and empowerment, particularly within the Black community. A bold social justice campaign would align with its ethos and resonate with its core audience. Its history as a Black-owned brand (now part of Unilever but still emphasising its origins) provides credibility in addressing racial and social justice issues. A Kaepernick-like campaign could elevate SheaMoisture's status as more than just a beauty brand, positioning it as a thought leader in conversations about race, gender, and beauty standards.

Any campaign in this vein would need to be perceived as genuine, not opportunistic. Nike is a global powerhouse with deep financial resources to weather backlash and capitalise on positive outcomes. SheaMoisture, while a well-known beauty brand, operates on a smaller scale and might face greater vulnerability to potential boycotts or negative press. Instead of a broad social justice campaign, SheaMoisture could focus on issues directly tied to beauty and representation, such as combating eurocentric beauty standards in sport, supporting natural hair acceptance and workout solutions, and continuing to promote economic empowerment in Black communities.

Black women face systemic and cultural barriers to running, such as lack of safety, visibility, and haircare concerns. Haircare specifically intersects with broader issues of representation and cultural identity. Through partnerships with running communities and campaigns focused on empowering Black women to overcome barriers, SheaMoisture can emerge as a leader in addressing this intersection. This aligns with the cultural shift toward inclusive advertising and creates a distinct space in both the haircare and fitness categories.

RUNNING CLUBS

The past few years have witnessed a notable boom in running clubs across London, transforming what was once considered a solitary sport into a communal and often social media-driven activity. Many of these clubs are emerging as hubs for diverse purposes, including fitness, social connection, and even dating, with examples like Sole Mates Run Club, sponsored by Tinder. As Honor Crean notes, running offers a cost-effective way for time-pressed Londoners to socialise, while brands are recognising its potential for fostering real-world connections. Luke Haynes at M&C Saatchi highlights this trend, suggesting **brands should take cues** from the joy found in authentic social interactions when planning their marketing strategies (Smyth, 2024).

A significant factor behind the rise of these clubs is their presence on Instagram, where the visual storytelling of shared runs and community vibes attracts new members. Katie Strick observes that many clubs have gained hundreds of followers and members within months of launching, showcasing the powerful synergy between fitness culture and social media platforms (Strick, 2024).

This trend aligns with findings from Strava's Year in Sport Trend Report, which reveals that **social connection is the top motivator for group exercise**, particularly among Gen Z, who are 29% more likely than Millennials to work out together. These social aspects of running also resonate with women, as Molly Slater-Davison describes: the activity fosters a sense of exploration and unpredictability, whether running, walking, or simply being outdoors (Haynes, 2024).

London's running boom underscores a shift in cultural perceptions of the sport, with participants spanning a wide spectrum of fitness levels and motivations. As Katie Strick notes, running has become a ubiquitous pastime embraced by everyone, from seasoned athletes to those who once swore off running shoes. **This surge reflects broader trends in urban fitness, affordability, and the appeal of genuine, community-driven activities.**

THE MAIN EVENT



INDIVI(DUALITY)



THE DUALITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

People in general tend to express themselves through their appearance, their hobbies, their career, and things they create. Throughout our conversations, participants brought up what they choose to wear and how they style their hair during workouts as their forms of self-expression.

In the case of Black female athletes, there is the duality of the expression of self and of the expression of culture. This was made clear when two of my interview participants mentioned Sha'Carri Richardson, the U.S. Olympic sprinter famous not only for her speed but also for her distinctive style which reflects many African American beauty trends.

“She wears a lace front, she wears wigs, she has lashes, she has really long nails and that's very, like, Black girl coded. So it's, like, seeing Black girls show up as they are in the sports world is very nice to see.”



THE DUALITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

“Her fiery orange hair, her outspoken disposition, and her long blinged out nails are a testament to the versatility of Black womanhood and their beauty.... **Sha’Carri is breaking the glass ceiling for women of colour athletes** who want their talent judged over and before their appearance” - Dr. Ciera Graham

Like Sha’Carri, one interviewee stated that the gym is “a must” whether or not her long nails will be sacrificed in the process, she wouldn’t skip just because they’re prone to break on a barbell.

While Sha’Carri is an olympian, so not your average runner, her acts of self expression represent both her culture and her personal style. Also not your average runner is singer Megan Thee Stallion, whose recent Nike campaign was cited by one interviewee as an inspiration to her.

Her subsequent mental-health resource hub [“Bad Bitches have Bad Days Too”](#) has shown the dedication of Black women to uplifting one another, and the site even has sections specific to therapy resources for Black people. The African American rap icon is clearly athletic but does not have the eurocentric slim build often sought after in popular ‘cardio culture.’ The influence of stars like Megan and Sha’Carri on popular culture and Black women’s self expression (specifically in the fitness sector) should not be mistaken.

The women I spoke to walked me through how their self and cultural expression manifests in their fitness and their day-to-day.

what they wear:

Clothes that are “sweaty and functional that I purchased for their function. Not because they make me look any certain way.”

“I am totally a woman who is paying attention to trends and gives a shit about trends. If Nike was like, oh, we've got bows on our stuff, I'd be like, wow, BOWS!” (see [this article](#) for more on The Great Bowification)

“I think in the beginning I was very like, you know, a GymShark girlie. I was like head to toe. Now it's like, whatever, because I'm like, I'm going to sweat. Like it's going to go to the washing machine.”

how they think about and do their hair:

“Hair for Black people is a lot more political than nails.”

“I could never go for a lunch run if I'm at the office. Because that will in my case I'll have to wash my hair.”

“I was always exposed to a lot of different hairstyles for my hair type, whether it be like braids, or if it was like, whatever the hair type was, I always wanted to have an option”

“I do all the heavy, sweaty sessions early in the week. That way, by Friday, I wash my hair in peace.”

“It's like a hassle, but no one else is able to braid their hair, and achieve that sort of hair as expression that Black people can.”

THERE IS BOTH A CULTURAL (GROUP) ASPECT AND A PERSONAL (INDIVIDUAL) ASPECT TO REPRESENTATION.

Expression for Black women also is impacted by pervasive eurocentric beauty standards. Sabrina Razack, a scholar at the University of Toronto and expert on sports and human rights, describes societal expectations for women as deeply rooted in respectability politics. She notes that these standards dictate how women should behave, present themselves, and treat their bodies. For Black women, this often intersects with **misogynoir**, a unique form of discrimination, especially evident in media portrayals (Nittle, 19th News).

The Black Pound Report introduced the concept of “Psychological Passing” which essentially was the shared feeling among Multi-Ethnic consumers that they need to “adjust and adapt their appearance or behaviour to ‘fit in.’” Further, “They report that 13% of survey respondents admitted they have ‘consciously changed the way they dress to be socially accepted’” (Warn, 2022). This is in line with the thick data findings.



There is still an unmet need in the running community for Black women and their hair. While there have been strides in recent years to develop accessible hair products, these have not been aimed towards athletes – yet again it has been up to the consumer to bend over backwards, experiment, and ultimately spend their time, money and energy sorting out their approach. In each of the interviews and casual run club conversations, women were quick to offer solutions that hair care brands could develop – dry shampoos, headbands, detanglers, and more. Is there a non-toxic way to keep the scalp from sweating so much? What could a brand do that would allow these women even more freedom when it comes to their appearance and their preferred sport? SheaMoisture may want to invest in product development to enhance their community offering if they were to break into this consumer group.

Expression in the case of Black female athletes is both individual and cultural, establishing it as an intersectional issue. It challenges multiple societal norms and barriers simultaneously. Historically, running as a sport has been dominated by White, middle-class participants, and Black women often face stereotypes, lack of representation, and systemic barriers that discourage their participation in fitness spaces. By claiming space in this domain, they redefine what fitness culture looks like, challenge exclusionary beauty standards, and create visibility for a broader range of Black female experiences. This act of self-expression also fosters empowerment, community, and cultural shift, inspiring others to join and breaking down entrenched social barriers.

“The adage that Black people must be twice as good to get half as far has continued to shape how Black women move and exist in predominately White spaces — whether that be corporate America, or on the track field.”

Dr. Ciera Graham, [Medium](#)



One interviewee cited recent release from Tyler, The Creator as a powerful artistic expression of Black women’s struggle with hair, both in their sense of self and sense of cultural obligation. Click the image to listen for yourself.

INDIVI(DUALITY)

INDIVISIBILITY

analysis theme 2/3



The prior discovery of duality and individuality proves that often for this audience, expression is not just of oneself but also, purposefully or not, a message of one's culture. These cultural and personal qualities, conveyed through appearance and behaviour, are indivisible from the individual.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality states that "different forms of discrimination – such as sexism and racism – can overlap and compound each other" (Mohdin, 2020). Over the past three decades, since Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality, the term has become a central topic in discussions about feminism and racial equity. Throughout much of the previously discussed literature, the impacts of racism on male Black athletes were investigated, but there was not nearly as much academic writing available on the subject specific to female Black athletes.

We discussed the racial injustices that seem indivisible from everyday life, starting with Air Jordans, the famous Michael Jordan sneaker by Nike. Michael Jordan makes only 3% of the profits of Air Jordan, which means that 97% of that \$5 billion annually goes to people who are not the Black athlete who popularised them. Recognising there are more complexities to the issue, respondents used words and phrases like **"par for the course,"** **"unsurprising"** and **"disingenuous"** when discussing the seemingly unfair profit dispersal. But one respondent then confessed she **"doesn't even think about it,"** remarking that the shoe in particular does not bear any association with the player to her anymore – if he were Black or White, she wouldn't be concerned with if advertisers or Nike executives made the majority of the profit.

The prejudices (positive and negative) associated with Black athletes came up as well.

“People do have this presumption sometimes of Black athletes that you *must* be faster, you *must* be whatever whatever. I guess I get it ,because the trend has been like the best sprinters *have* been Black for example, and it’s like OKAY I kind of see it sometimes... but it can also be an uncomfortable pressure.”

The pressures and expectations of society are indivisible from all lived experiences.

“Society, you know, parents and whatever, they say that your hair cannot be a mess.. our appearance and what you choose to wear, it's all communication. And people with power are who decide, for the most part, how things are perceived. And the way that you're being perceived can keep you safe, to an extent.”

On the topic of safety, we spoke on how it feels extremely common to read reports of women being attacked or worse when they are running on their own. This risk is made worse when racial prejudices come into play (Hornbuckle, 2021).

“Every woman I speak to has that same feeling: running, walking, or just being outside, you don’t know what’s around the corner” (Smyth, 2024).

As with the intersection of race and gender identity, there are many other factors that can impact the lived experiences we have like faith, sexuality, or as discussed by one interviewee, disability.

When asked about the difference in how she feels doing individual versus team sports, she shared that team sports have been a challenge for her due to her **dyspraxia**, a common movement and coordination disorder. She finds that her movements and abilities are “inconsistent” and has in the past been afraid to let her teammates down, so she opts for individual sports.

One of the other respondents has a young son, and finds that motherhood is indivisible from her priorities, even when taking her “me-time.”

“I have an hour here and I have to get this and that done.. your priorities change. If he is sick, then no moment for myself, no run today.

The experiences of those I interviewed are also indivisible from the current experiences of most young women in the UK – the cost of living crisis, uncertainties about the future, and priorities outside of wellness. Sometimes exercise will fall by the wayside in these instances.

The third of my interviewees lives in her family home with her mother, her brother, and her older sister who recently had twins. Each week she is re-prioritising her life around her job, her workout regimen, her social life, and now more than ever her family. She says she has sacrificed sleep and sessions at the gym to help with them.

“Maybe this is a bit morbid, but I think it is definitely one of those things of, like, you know, life is passing by. And it's going to pass by regardless. So I want to experience the most, the best of what I can.”

The narratives shared reveal how identity, safety, ability levels and societal expectations intersect to shape the experiences of Black women athletes, illustrating a complex web of pressures and opportunities.

These indivisible parts of who we are underscore the nuanced challenges of all people, compounded by systemic injustices. Despite these barriers, the resilience and determination to "experience the most, the best of what I can" exemplify how these women redefine participation in sports



as both personal empowerment and quiet resistance to societal constraints. Brands like She can support women through each of these challenges and stages potentially by engaging with them as a community and using their vast resources as tools for empowerment.

LIBERATION

analysis theme 3/3



LIBERATION

The appeal of running, to many, is that it is easily financially accessible and can be done in most places.

“it's very much about convenience, like affordability.”

Many members of the 25-40 year old consumer base investigated in this research are completely overscheduled and overworked. When booking a workout class at a studio or gym feels like another thing to pencil in at only specifically offered intervals, it doesn't feel liberating at all.

“I came to a point where I found that everything in my life was built around scheduling. I felt that I needed something in my life that was more free and spontaneous. Having something that I could do any time, any where, a long period of time or short period of time”

While socialising can improve the experience of exercise, these women see activities like running and hiking as mostly solo endeavors. They are liberated from the schedules of friends and beholden only to themselves.

“I needed the support of my friends to feel more encouraged to go out (hiking) on my own. Before university I wouldn't have, but now I suggest it instead of just following”

Of course, the physical benefits can prove as an investment in long-term freedom too. Better health in one's youth is thought to make aging easier. Improvements to cardiovascular health, strength in muscles and bones, enhancements to flexibility, and reduction to the risk of falls and injuries are among the positive outcomes of a continually active lifestyle (National Institute on Aging, 2020).

LIBERATION

“People said the more muscle you have, the better you usually are off longer term when you're older. I was kind of thinking like, what is the best way to like, I guess, increase like longevity in the body.”

The doctorate student mentioned that in her cognitive psychology class, exercise is frequently mentioned as a key combatant against dementia, and this influences her to engage in it.

Running and other types of movement have also provided these women with liberation from expectations for female hobbies and representation.

“I was intrigued by adopting what’s not necessarily a women’s sport.”

“I find it quite liberating to put on sort of ugly clothes that I wear when I'm running and not be a sexy girl for a moment”



Women were not allowed to run marathons until 1972, yet in 2024, women between the ages of 25 and 29 were the most represented age and gender group running the New York City Marathon ([NYRR 2024](#)). While only one of the women I interviewed was keen on a distance that far, the option to be part of events like this is still relatively new and not to be taken for granted. A brand like SheaMoisture could see these community events and challenges as opportunities to become involved with this key consumer group.

LIBERATION

While engaging in sport and wellness is clearly a priority for these women, it does not define them. Brands need to understand these nuances in order to address the complexities of their needs. For SheaMoisture, this means recognizing that while these women value the freedom and accessibility of running, their routines are often intertwined with cultural and personal factors like haircare. By emphasizing products that prioritize sweat-friendly, protective, and restorative haircare solutions, SheaMoisture can position itself as a brand that supports not just their physical wellness but also their sense of self-expression and cultural identity. This aligns with the larger narrative of empowering women to pursue wellness on their own terms, while acknowledging the unique barriers they face.

Ultimately, being a Black female athlete is not without its challenges, societal, personal or otherwise, but it comes with excellent psychological and physical benefits which allow these women to live more enriched lives.

“I'm in love with, I guess, maintaining my health and my ability to be independent.”

“I think the majority of people are just going for a challenge to say, I did it.”

LAST LAP

conclusion



Through this research I have aimed to develop a 3-dimensional understanding of what it's like to be a Black female runner in the UK. While the thick data was invaluable, there is no way to form a fully conclusive theory to what is the lived experience of such a large number of people not interviewed, with many identity characteristics that could not be captured here. Race and racial identity are only a sliver of the many considerations advertisers need to make when targeting this particular demographic – and while some conclusions can be drawn given the number of Black individuals who live in cities, the number who are female-identifying, and the smaller still group which run for pleasure and exercise, ultimately testing would likely be necessary to further support the analysis presented here.

Running clubs, sport businesses, and unexpected challenger brands are not yet making the most of this group, who are inspired by their community and invested in their health and future. As a mixed race runner in the UK, I feel that the communities I'm part of (and women who haven't joined them yet) would really benefit from investment by businesses who can carve out an authentic place for themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the guidance of my course lead and tutor Paul Caplan. Thank you for letting each 15-minute chat turn into an hour and validating my interests and many sport-related tangents.

Appreciation to my colleagues Harry, Frances, and Krista for their thoughtful questions and compassion towards me in these last few wild months.

To Mike for keeping me fed and watered and being the very best editor.

Lastly, thank you to my cohort and my interviewees whom I truly would have failed without.

REFERENCES

- Åkestam, N. (2017). *Understanding Advertising Stereotypes: Social and Brand-Related Effects of Stereotyped versus Non-Stereotyped Portrayals in Advertising*. [online] Available at: <https://research.hhs.se/esploro/outputs/doctoral/Understanding-Advertising-Stereotypes-Social-and-Brand-Related/991001480222106056> [Accessed Oct. 2024].
- Appiah, K.A. (2020). *The Case for Capitalizing the 'B' in Black*. [online] The Atlantic. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/>
- Appiah, O. and Liu, Y.-I. (2009). Reaching the Model Minority: Ethnic Differences in Responding to Culturally Embedded Targeted- and Non-Targeted Advertisements. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 31(1), pp.27–41. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2009.10505255>.
- Advertising Standards Authority (2022). Tackling Harmful Racial and Ethnic Stereotyping in Advertising Summary Report Background. Available at: <https://www.asa.org.uk/static/df6dc19-6499-4b12-9449d07591d68dbb/333a4e95-362a-4ff7-90531a1e4fe9328d/ASA-RES-Summary-Report-Final.pdf>.
- Boardroom Beauty Podcast*, (2024). Acast. 26 Jun. Available at: <https://www.boardroombeauty.org/podcast/blog-post-title-enmej-6tggc-2n5kb-lgdl7-s63sr-zdfew> [Accessed Jun. 2024].
- Bouclème (2024). *News | Blog*. [online] Bouclème. Available at: <https://www.boucleme.co.uk/blogs/news>.
- Cardoso, F., Davie, E., Treloar, N., Woodhead, D. and Bell, A. (2024). *Just Living and Coping*. [online] Centre for Mental Health. Available at: <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/just-living-and-coping/>.

Chabo, E. (2019). *This is the new chapter of the black hair industry*. [online] Stylist. Available at: <https://www.stylist.co.uk/beauty/future-black-hair-industry-natural-hair-black-owned-business-beauty/304786>.

Chertoff, E. (2012). *The Racial Divide on ... Sneakers*. [online] The Atlantic. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/08/the-racial-divide-on-sneakers/261256/>.

Clarendon, D. (2024). *What Michael Jordan earns from his Air Jordan brand surpasses even the wildest estimates*. [online] <https://marketrealist.com>. Available at: <https://marketrealist.com/michael-jordan-makes-way-more-than-you-think-from-his-air-jordan-brand/>.

Cobb, J. (2018). *Behind Nike's Decision to Stand by Colin Kaepernick*. [online] The New Yorker. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/behind-nikes-decision-to-stand-by-colin-kaepernick>.

Davis, K. (2024). *5 Black hair care trends to watch in 2024*. [online] [CosmeticsDesign-Europe.com](https://www.cosmeticsdesign-europe.com). Available at: <https://www.cosmeticsdesign-europe.com/Article/2024/02/14/5-Black-hair-care-trends-to-watch-in-2024/> [Accessed 2024].

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2024). *Overweight Adults | Active Lives Survey*. [online] www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk. Available at: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/health/diet-and-exercise/overweight-adults/latest/#by-ethnicity-over-time>.

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2021). *Rural Urban Classification*. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-classification>.

England Athletics (2021). *Our Strategy*. [online] England Athletics. Available at: <https://www.englandathletics.org/about-us/our-strategy/>.

Evans, A. (2021). Soul Cap: Afro swim cap Olympic rejection 'heartbreaking' for black swimmers. *BBC News*. [online] 2 Jul. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-57688380>.

Freeman-Powell, S. (2023). *How the London Marathon is seeking to 'change the face of running' by attracting more diverse participation*. [online] Sky News. Available at: <https://news.sky.com/story/how-the-london-marathon-is-seeking-to-change-the-face-of-running-by-attracting-more-diverse-participation-12863815>.

Giorgis, H. (2015). *Shea Moisture Is Proof Of The Power Of The Natural Hair Movement*. [online] BuzzFeed. Available at: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/hgiorgis/shea-moisture-and-the-rise-of-the-natural-hair-mov-1ckfg>.

Graham, C. (2021). *Sha' Carri Richardson and the complexities of white supremacy*. [online] Medium. Available at: <https://cagraham1986.medium.com/sha-carri-richardson-and-the-complexities-of-white-supremacy-d827a0f7ef48>.

Green, C.L. (1999). Ethnic Evaluations of Advertising: Interaction Effects of Strength of Ethnic Identification, Media Placement, and Degree of Racial Composition. *Journal of Advertising*, 28(1), pp.49–64. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1999.10673576>.

Hall, R.R., Francis, S., Whitt-Glover, M., Loftin-Bell, K., Swett, K. and McMichael, A.J. (2013). Hair Care Practices as a Barrier to Physical Activity in African American Women. *JAMA Dermatology*, [online] 149(3), p.310. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamadermatol.2013.1946>.

Haynes, L. (2024). *The Togetherness Issue (2), Fancom M&C Saatchi Sport & Entertainment*. [online] M&C Saatchi Sport & Entertainment, pp.31–32. Available at: <https://mcsaatchisena.com/work/fancom-2024/>.

Higgins, V., Nazroo, J. and Brown, M. (2019). Pathways to Ethnic Differences in obesity: the Role of migration, Culture and socio-economic Position in the UK. *SSM - Population Health*, [online] 7(7), p.100394. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2019.100394>.

Hornbuckle, L.M. (2021). Running while Black: A distinctive safety concern and barrier to exercise in White neighborhoods. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 22, p.101378. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2021.101378>.

Jones, V. (2010). It's Not Black and White: Advertising and Race in Cultural Context. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 23(1), pp.45–64. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/08911760903442143>.

JOY Collective (2019). *The CROWN Research Study: Creating a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural hair*. [online] Unilever PLC. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5edc69fd622c36173f56651f/t/5edcaa2fe5ddef345e087361/1591650865168/Dove_research_brochure2020_FINAL3.pdf [Accessed Dec. 2024].

Kaplan, D. (2020). Two years later, Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad an even bigger success, poll shows. *The New York Times*. [online] 15 Jun. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/1872725/2020/06/15/two-years-later-nikes-colin-kaepernick-a-d-an-even-bigger-success-poll-shows/>.

Kelner, M. (2018). *Nike's controversial Colin Kaepernick ad campaign its most divisive yet*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/sep/04/nike-controversial-colin-kaepernick-campaign-divisive>.

Khouv, A. (2020). *5 London-based inclusive run collectives you should know about*. [online] Runner's World. Available at: <https://www.runnersworld.com/uk/training/a33450496/london-based-inclusive-run-collectives/> [Accessed 2024].

Lauretta, A. (2020). *Why More African Americans Running Long Distance Matters*. [online] Women's Running. Available at: <https://www.womensrunning.com/culture/african-americans-running-long-distance-matters/>.

Mbilishaka, A. and Lacey, A. (2019). Don't Sweat Your Hair Out: The Frequency of Exercise for African American Women with Natural Hair. *Journal of Exercise and Nutrition*, [online] 2(1). Available at: <https://journalofexerciseandnutrition.com/index.php/JEN/article/view/39/32>.

McCall, J. (2020). *'Smart' vs 'Athletic': how AI reveals the unconscious racial bias in our language*. [online] prospectmagazine.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/politics/39807/smart-vs-athletic-how-ai-reveals-the-unconscious-racial-bias-in-our-language>.

McCarthy, D. and Jones, R.L. (1997). SPEED, AGGRESSION, STRENGTH, AND TACTICAL NAÏVETÉ. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 21(4), pp.348–362. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/019372397021004003>.

McCarthy, D., Jones, R. L., & Potrac, P. (2003). Constructing Images and Interpreting Realities: The Case of the Black Soccer Player on Television. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(2), 217-238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690203038002005>

Mercurio, E. and Filak, V. F. (2010) 'Roughing the Passer: The Framing of Black and White Quarterbacks Prior to the NFL Draft', *Howard Journal of Communications*, 21(1), pp. 56–71. doi: 10.1080/10646170903501328.

Mohdin, A. (2020). *Kimberlé Crenshaw: the woman who revolutionised feminism – and landed at the heart of the culture wars*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/nov/12/kimberle-crenshaw-the-woman-who-revolutionised-feminism-and-landed-at-the-heart-of-the-culture-wars>.

Mogaji, E. and Nguyen, N. P. (2023) 'Beautiful Black British brand: exploring intersectionality of race, gender, and self-branding of Black British sportswomen', *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(6), pp. 1708–1731. doi: 10.1080/16184742.2023.2257229.

National Institute on Aging (2020). *How Older Adults Can Get Started With Exercise*. [online] National Institute on Aging. Available at: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-and-physical-activity/how-older-adults-can-get-started-exercise>.

NHS England (2016). *Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England, 2014 - NHS Digital*. [online] NHS Digital. Available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey-survey-of-mental-health-and-wellbeing-england-2014>.

Nike (2022). *Play New*. [online] Nike.com. Available at: <https://www.nike.com/jp/en/a/play-new>.

Nike (2024). *Great Athletes Remind the World There's Nothing Wrong with Wanting to Win*. [online] Nike.com. Available at: <https://about.nike.com/en/newsroom/releases/winning-isnt-for-everyone-campaign>.

Nyrr.org. (2024). *New York Road Runners Official Race Results*. [online] Available at: <https://results.nyrr.org/event/M2024/overview> [Accessed Nov. 2024].

ONS (2022). *Ethnic group, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics*. [online] www.ons.gov.uk. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021>.

Payne, A. and Duster, C.R. (2017). *'We really f-ed this one up': Shea Moisture apologizes for ad*. [online] NBC News. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/she-moisture-ad-falls-flat-after-backlash-n750421>.

Petty, R.E. and Cacioppo, J.T., (1986). "The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion." *In Communication and persuasion* (pp. 1-24). Springer New York.

Rasmussen, R., Esgate, A., & Turner, D. (2005). On Your Marks, Get Stereotyped, Go!: Novice Coaches and Black Stereotypes in Sprinting. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 29(4), 426-436. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723504273122>

Raiman, L., Amarnani, R., Abdur-Rahman, M., Marshall, A., & Mani-Babu, S. (2023). The role of physical activity in obesity: let's actively manage obesity. *Clinical medicine (London, England)*, 23(4), 311–317. <https://doi.org/10.7861/clinmed.2023-0152>

Readman, M. (2020). How advertising fuels racist myths in sport. [online] www.campaignlive.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/advertising-fuels-racist-myths-sport/1692051>.

Roberts, K. (2015). Being African: What does hair have to do with it? *BBC News*. [online] 21 Jul. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-33525254>.

Robles, P. (2017). *Shea Moisture's customer backlash was caused by poor brand management, not bad advertising*. [online] Econsultancy. Available at: <https://econsultancy.com/shea-moisture-s-customer-backlash-was-caused-by-poor-brand-management-not-bad-advertising/>.

Ryder, M. (2013). *Why don't black people run marathons?* [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/the-running-blog/2013/jul/03/why-dont-black-people-run-marathons>.

Sadé, R. and Shabbir, M. (2024). *Get(ting) Out: Why Young Brits Want to Leave the UK*. [online] London: Word On The Curb. Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://313c3913-041a-4c98-bf1e-93c24de131ce.usrfiles.com/ugd/313c39_45a06b354abc48cab6fa4920944945b0.pdf.

Sierra, J.J., M.R. Hyman, and R.S. Heiser. (2012). "Ethnic identity in advertising: A review and metaanalysis". *Journal of Promotion Management* 18, no. 4: 489_513.

Smyth, D. (2024). *The growth of running crews*. [online] Runner's World. Available at: <https://www.runnersworld.com/uk/news/a62133353/running-crews/>.

- Sport England (2023). *Active Lives Children and Young People Survey Academic Year 2022-23*. [online] Sport England. Available at: https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/data/active-lives#report_archiveaccess_the_data
- Sport England (2024). *Research | Focus on Inequalities*. [online] Sport England. Available at: <https://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/research#focus-on-inequalities-36027> [Accessed 2024].
- Strick, K. (2024). *The best (and coolest) running clubs in London*. [online] The Standard. Available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/how-run-clubs-got-cool-best-running-clubs-london-b1151161.html>.
- Sudbury-Riley, Lynn & Wilberforce, Fiona. (2006). The portrayal of black people in UK television advertising: Perception and reality. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. 5. 465 - 476. 10.1002/cb.195.
- Tajfel, H. E. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. Academic Press.
- Trilling, D. (2020). *Why is the UK government suddenly targeting 'critical race theory'? | Daniel Trilling*. [online] The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/23/uk-critical-race-theory-trump-conservatives-structural-inequality>.
- Unilever PLC (2022). *How SheaMoisture is working to close the racial wealth gap*. [online] Unilever. Available at: <https://www.unilever.com/news/news-search/2022/how-sheamoisture-is-working-to-close-the-racial-wealth-gap/#footnote-vt44m63XMUo2> [Accessed 2024].
- United States Census Bureau (2023). *QuickFacts: United States*. [online] Census Bureau QuickFacts. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>.

Ware, P. (2015). *'Black People don't drink tea...'* *The experience of Rural Black and Minority Ethnic Community Groups in England*. [online] Third Sector Research Center. Available at: <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/tsrc/working-papers/working-paper-130.pdf>.

Warn, G. (2022). *The Black Pound Report: The £2.7billion Missed Opportunity*. [online] The British Beauty Council. Available at: <https://britishbeautycouncil.com/the-2-7billion-missed-opportunity/>.

Young, P. (2024). *Does Team GB still have a diversity problem?* [online] Huck Magazine | Outsiders Project. Available at: <https://www.huckmag.com/article/does-team-gb-still-have-a-diversity-problem> [Accessed 2024].

Zúñiga, Miguel. (2015). African American Consumers' Evaluations of Ethnically Primed Advertisements. *Journal of Advertising*. 45. 1-8. 10.1080/00913367.2015.1083919.