

An Examination of Gender and Race in Newspaper Coverage of Olympian Gabby Douglas



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Description



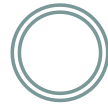
- Analyzed the portrayal of Olympian Gabby Douglas within newspapers
 - *The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Virginian Pilot, and The Washington Post*
- Specifically examined the notions of gender and race as reflected through the use of nicknames to describe her

Significance



- Important to examine how gender and race were expressed in media as media is ever-changing
- Newspaper coverage influences how an audience understands and perceives Douglas, as well as gender and race overall

Research Questions



- Was gender and race expressed in stereotypical ways, or was the media unbiased in their descriptions?
- Did the way Douglas was described vary across the U.S.?

Method



- **Cluster Criticism, which was developed by Kenneth Burke**
 - Look for key terms and their significance, as well as what other words cluster around the key terms
 - Key terms are discovered either by intensity or frequency

My Analysis



- Most terms found were classified under the intensity category of the method
- Discovered 7 key terms: “golden girl,” “sweetheart,” “megawatt,” “sassy,” “African American,” “black,” and “flying squirrel”

Gendered Conclusions



- The terms “golden girl” and “sweetheart” were found to be forms of infantilism
- The terms “megawatt” and “sassy” were used to describe her looks and personality

Racial Conclusions



- Discovered the terms “African American” and “black”
 - Both of the key terms “African American and “black” clustered the words first and community
 - This can be viewed as spotlighting her race

Racial Conclusions Continued



- Term “flying squirrel” was coined in regard to movement but could have other implications
 - Historically, black dancers were described as wild, exotic, primitive, and animalistic
 - Douglas’s nickname could hark back to those past descriptions

Overall Conclusions



- The media turned Douglas into a media package of gender and race
- She was constrained by masculine definitions of gender such as infantilism (viewing women as younger or weaker) and a focus on her looks
- She was classified as “African American” and “black” thus spotlighting her race and confining her to a specific category

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