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Editorial

1  **Face to Race — Gender, Ethnicity and the Media** is the fourth issue of *gender forum* to address the nexus of race and gender, this time with an emphasis on audiovisual media. Television and film have been of key concern for cultural studies, and certain strategies in media representation have been shown to apply across dimensions of ethnic, sexual, economic or religious difference. This issue addresses the question whether diversity transcending discreet categories of difference does and can find representation beyond the fringes of our mediascapes. Frequently, media representations seemingly progressive in regard to either race or gender turn out to be deplorably heteronormative or eurocentric.

2  As constructions of race and gender inform or subvert each other, they can be alternatingly employed as strategies of cultural normativity. The necessary theoretical framework for discussions of these issues focusing on notions of power and the gaze, of visuality and the body, of voyeurism and reciprocal visual pleasure has been of central importance in feminism, gender studies as well as postcolonial studies.

3  The three articles in this issue address these concerns from different angles. Jennifer Esposito and Bettina Love's study "*The Black Lesbians Are White and the Studs Are Femmes: A Cultural Studies Analysis of The L Word*" approaches the popular American television series *The L Word*. Being one of the few mainstream television formats centering on lesbian characters, the show's representative politics are scrutinized in regard to their homogenizing tendencies. The study also includes focus group data that emphasize the identificatory relevance such a show has to be credited with in a heteronormative mediascape.

4  Norbert Finzsch's essay "*Male Gaze and Racism*" transfers a decentered notion of the gaze to the study of racism. Necessarily, such an approach entails a positioning vis à vis Laura Mulvey's film theory as well as its later modifications. Within the context of a definition of racism as a visual ideology, the possibility of returning the gaze and subverting the power strategies is focused on. Drawing on Lacan and Barthes this essay provides a historical analysis of Australia's colonization and the depiction of the indigenous Others foregrounding the counterdiscourses challenging the normative, white male heterosexual "viscourses" of colonial accounts.

5  Focusing on a series of events in the 2007 UK *Celebrity Big Brother* series, Melissa Wright's contribution "*Racist Bullying or ‘Girls Being Girls’? Untangling Constructions of Race and Gender in Celebrity Big Brother*" discusses the masking of racial privilege via the
use of gendered discursive constructions within the theoretical framework of critical whiteness studies. Wright's analysis addresses the discursive tactics attempting to hide the series' underlying racism, such as the assumption that racism is a phenomenon limited to male working class contexts.

This issue is completed by Review(s) of Stefanie Tannen's *The Female Trickster: The Mask that Reveals, Post-Jungian and Postmodern Psychological Perspectives on Women in Contemporary Culture* and Marc Epprecht's *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*. 
Abstract:
Showtime's popular series The L Word follows the lives and relationships of a group of middle class, primarily white lesbians living in Los Angeles, California. Because there are so few representations of lesbians airing on cable television in the United States, we argue that the representations that do exist must be continually critiqued. People use popular culture texts, like The L Word, to learn about themselves and others. We conduct a feminist cultural studies critique of the text and argue it is heteronormative and privileges whiteness. We also include qualitative data from a focus group with viewers of the show to support our analysis.

1 In an early episode of Showtime's popular series The L Word, a group of lesbians sits around a table having breakfast. They are all young, white upper-middle class femmes. In walks Shane, a self-proclaimed butch. She is dressed in tight jeans and a close-fitting shirt. We read her as a femme. However, one of her friends says that she looks 'too gay.' This short excerpt raises a variety of questions for us as academics and cultural theorists. For example, what does a lesbian really look like? Who gets to decide? On The L Word, it is the producers who decide but the power of these representations are such that often these decisions made by a few have societal consequences for many.

2 The L Word follows the lives and relationships of a group of middle class, well-to-do lesbians, living in the plush hills of Los Angeles. Although The L Word has aired four seasons, our analysis centers on Season One. We believe Season One deserves a comprehensive cultural analysis because it was a defining moment in television history. It was celebrated as the lesbian Queer as Folk and received much attention in the media. Season

1 Showtime is a subscription cable channel widely aired in the United States and Turkey. Showtime has over 39,500,000 subscribed viewers. According to Cabletelevision Advertising (2006), 'the average Cable household income stands at $68,151/year — +21% higher than the average non-Cable home.' This information is important given that Showtime, and thus The L Word, may only be available to those with a particular income level. This is particularly important given Jon Binnie's (1995) assertion that queer textual studies often focus on meaning but neglect production (markets and capital accumulation).

2 We use the words 'stud,' 'butch' and 'femme' to denote particular kinds of lesbians. Though, we do so with the caveat that these are racially and culturally specific terms. For instance, 'stud' is a term intending to denote the performance of Black masculinity by a woman while 'butch,' the term often used in popular culture, is the term White women performing White masculinity utilize. 'Dom,' is another term often used by lesbians of color to signify the performance of Black or Latino/a masculinity. The word 'femme' to signify the performance of lesbian sexuality is not racially specific, though, performances of femininity are, of course, racially specific.

3 See Esposito and Baez, 2008 for a discussion on the uses and limits of 'gaydar.'

4 The L Word has numerous producers: Ilene Chaiken, Steve Golin, Mark Horowitz, Elizabeth Hunter, Larry Kennar, Rose Lam, Bob Roe, Rose Troche, and Mark Zakarin.
One, is set around seven lesbians and two heterosexual characters, Tim (Eric Mabius) and Kit (Pam Grier). A few of the main characters embody an ambiguous sexual identity. For example, Jenny (Mia Kirshner), Tim's fiancée, is a talented writer, who seems to be in a constant battle to find her sexuality and sanity. Her current love interest, Marina (Karina Lombard), is the owner of the Planet, a café that the The L Word women frequent. Similar to Jenny's personal sexuality conflict, Alice (Leisha Hailey) is a funny, witty, bisexual, who is looking for love in all the wrong places. Dana (Erin Daniels), Alice's best friend, is a professional tennis player with a talent for attracting the wrong women and, to add to the dramatic ambiguity, she has not fully accepted the fact that she is gay. Tina (Laurel Holloman) is a selfless lesbian, who wants nothing more than to have a baby with her partner Bette (Jennifer Beals), a high strung, control freak who demands the undivided attention of Tina and everyone around her. Important for this paper's argument, Bette is biracial; however, she performs for the most part as a White woman. Bette's half-sister Kit is a recovering alcoholic with a troublesome past of which she cannot seem to let go. Shane (Katherine Moennig), mentioned above, is the so-called butch of the show, a tomboyish heart breaker who has a problem with commitment. All of the characters, with the exception of Bette and Kit, are White.

3 Our analysis of The L Word is important to the fields of sociology, education, queer theory, and cultural studies because popular culture is a site that educates us about others and about ourselves. Marginalized groups such as lesbians, who are not well represented in mainstream culture, are "particularly susceptible to being 'created' by popular representations" (Inness 3). The L Word's representations inform heterosexual perceptions of lesbianism but they also, to an extent, inform lesbians' perceptions about themselves. As Kellner argues:

Media culture also provides the materials out of which many people construct their sense of class, of ethnicity and race, of nationality, of sexuality, of 'us' and 'them.' Media culture helps shape the prevalent view of the world and deepest values: it defines what is considered good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil. (1)

Indeed as Hall eloquently states, "it is only through the way in which we represent and imagine ourselves that we come to know how we are constituted and who we are" (30). Given that school systems in the United States, for the most part, silence lesbianism, The L Word becomes an important site for education (for lesbians and heterosexuals) about who lesbians are. The L Word may be, in fact, one of the only texts students consume that takes up the issue of lesbianism.

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5 We have analyzed Season one only. The L Word has now aired Season Four.
In recent years, media representations of homosexuality on television have increased substantially; however, heterosexual normalization and andocentric ideology fuel many of these representations. We argue that the representations of lesbians on The L Word are heteronormative and, thus, narrow. We utilize the term heteronormativity similar to the definition provided by Berlant and Warner, who state that it is the 'institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged' (548f). In this way, heterosexuality becomes normative and this normativity is recreated through daily social interactions, institutional ideologies, and popular culture texts. In fact, the privileging of heterosexuality "often operates unconsciously or in ways that make it particularly difficult to identify" (Valocchi 756). Popular culture, as an institution, helps reify heterosexuality's dominance when heteronormativity within representations remains un-interrogated.

Heteronormativity pervades The L Word as characters are portrayed in an assimilationist fashion. They experience serial monogamous relationships and some of them work toward obtaining the ultimate signifiers of heterosexuality, a house and children. The show privileges heterosexuality by representing lesbianism as similar to heterosexuality. For example, the first season does not examine homophobia and discrimination experienced as a daily fact. The realities that we experience as lesbians, such as having to perpetually 'out' ourselves or 'teach' heterosexuals about lesbian life, are not represented. Such a representation does disservice to the many complexities of lesbian life. The L Word helps create a heteronormative narrative.

We will argue that The L Word makes the struggles lesbians face invisible and, instead, defines lesbianism by the sex act. This narrow representation may teach heterosexuals (and some lesbians) that lesbianism is a social past time, not fraught with political, economic, and other difficulties related to discrimination. While The L Word works to inscribe lesbianism within heterosexuality, it also portrays a very White middle-class version of lesbian life. Although there are Black and Latina characters, their race and ethnicity and any hint of cultural difference are often erased by the show's normative intent.

We write from a feminist cultural studies standpoint, which posits that textual representations matter and that most popular culture texts articulate ideologies of race, gender, class, and sexuality. In addition, viewers of a text enter into a relationship with all texts. This means, then, that there are multiple representations of The L Word. Ours is but one.

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6 McRobbie, 1991; Probyn, 1993
7 Kellner, 1995
interpret the text from the standpoint of lesbian women of color. Although within queer theory there is a movement away from textual analysis and a turn toward "analysis of practices as they are constructed in social and institutional locations" (Talburt 526), this project is still important because it examines a site of learning about lesbianism. Our project also uncovers the ways a dominant text such as *The L Word* participates in the silencing of the Black lesbian. As Hammonds questions:

... if the sexualities of black women have been shaped by silence, erasure, and invisibility in dominant discourses, then are black lesbian sexualities doubly silenced? What methodologies are available to read and understand this void and its effects on that which is visible? Conversely, how does the structure of what is visible, namely white female sexualities, shape those not-absent-though-not present black female sexualities...? (141)

Though we will examine this argument in more detail later, it is important to note that our analysis takes up the ways in which the Black lesbian functions as an absent-present in *The L Word*.

We also recognize that popular culture is not only a site where identities are produced, but it is also a site of struggle. It is a place where viewers negotiate, resist, and even reshape texts. It is in this spirit that our critique of *The L Word* moves beyond whether or not representations of lesbians are 'good' or 'bad.' In fact, it would be difficult to determine what a good representation is versus a bad one because lesbianism as a social identity is so complex. Instead, we are interested in examining how the text takes up the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation because viewers construct lived experiences from texts.

As we begin our critique of *The L Word*, it is important to remind ourselves of Fiske's argument that television texts, in order to be popular, must appeal to multiple audiences. Fiske imagines the text as existing in "a state of tension between forces of closure, which attempt to close down its potential meanings in favor of its preferred ones, and the forces of openness, which enable its variety of viewers to negotiate an appropriate variety of meanings" (84). This means, then, that television texts can be interpreted multiple ways and, thus, they are situated within a struggle for meanings. This is one reason we felt it important to include voices of viewers besides our own. In addition, we follow Stein and Plummer's challenge to queer sociology:

Queer theorists have attuned us to the importance of looking at texts, but as sociologists we need to look at how identities are constituted in the cultural practices of everyday life, though mediated by texts. (184-185)

Because all viewers may negotiate the text's meanings and because all viewers make these negotiations based on lived identities, we also include qualitative data collected from a focus
group intended to investigate the lived experiences and meaning making of the participants' relationships with *The L Word*. Data from the focus group suggests that the informants found *The L Word* problematic on many levels, but they were still happy that a lesbian representation existed on cable television.

**Focus Group Data Collection**

10 We recruited participants for the focus group through snowball sampling. We were interested in including those who watched the show regularly. All of the participants had viewed Season One and, at the time of data collection, were watching season two. We also wanted to interview mostly women of color as we were interested in learning their perspectives on race and *The L Word*. On the evening of the focus group, we screened the first episode for participants. We then engaged in a three hour question/answer session. It was our hope to foster an open dialogue among participants instead of a dyadic dialogue between an individual participant and the researchers. Some questions we posed included: "What do you think about the show? Which characters do you identify with and why? How is lesbianism represented? How is race represented?"

11 The focus group participants were a diverse group of women, all identified as lesbians or bisexual. Six informants classified themselves as Black and one informant as White. Informant number one, Devon, is a 27-year-old third grade teacher. Informant number two, Maxine, is a 33-year-old corporate lawyer. Lisa, informant number three, is a White 24-year-old bisexual, non-profit program manager. Informants four and five, Pam (31), a fourth grade teacher and Toni (32), a chef, both identify as studs. Natalie, a 29-year-old middle school teacher, was informant six. Finally, Tracy is a 30-year old elementary teacher. We tape recorded the 3-hour conversation and then transcribed it. We utilized open coding to develop a variety of codes. From these codes, a variety of themes emerged. Some of the themes fit within our own analysis about the text and some were new ideas to us. We will include focus group data throughout the body of the paper to enhance our argument and to illustrate diverse perspectives of *The L Word* viewers.

**Do Black Lesbians Really Exist?**

12 Since the inception of lesbians on television, Black lesbian characters have been limited. This section will explore the presence/absence of Blackness in general and Black lesbianism in particular. *The L Word*s absence of Black lesbianism privileges the experiences of White lesbians, and attempts to construct those experiences as normative. By doing so, The
L Word as a text undermines the presence of Black lesbians as well as other lesbian 'minority' groups in the United States. Although we argue *The L Word* helps to make Blackness and lesbianism invisible, we recognize that viewers actively make meaning of the texts and can negotiate ideologies.

13 Jennifer Beals, and her character Bette Porter, is the quintessential example of the presence/absence of Black lesbianism. Beals is of mixed racial heritage: her father is African-American and her mother is Irish. Therefore, her portrayal as Bette, a biracial (African-American/White) woman, is a natural role for Beals. Our examination of *The L Word* indicates that, aesthetically and socially, Bette does not identify with African-American culture. For example, Bette has been in a long-term relationship with a White woman, Tina, for a number of years. Bette's ex-girlfriends of whom we, as viewers, are aware are also White women. The viewer is left with the impression by Bette's previous relationships that she exclusively dates White women. Bette eventually engages in an affair with a Latina (season two) but in subsequent seasons dates White women.\(^8\) This choice to date only White women legitimates her Whiteness because Bette is, therefore, never called upon to identify with her Blackness due to her limited interaction with Blacks romantically or socially. Furthermore, Bette's Blackness is invisible to her fellow lesbian characters. For example, Bette does not discuss her biracial 'lived' experiences or openly acknowledge her Blackness with her friends; the only signifier of Bette's Blackness is her half-sister, Kit (Pam Grier), an easily identifiable Black woman. This subsequently makes her Blackness invisible to the viewers who watch *The L Word*.

14 The most glaring example of Bette's assimilation to White culture occurs in an early episode of *The L Word*. Bette and Tina attend a therapy session for people interested in parenting. In the session, an easily identified Black woman, Yolanda, challenges Bette to assert her own Blackness. This occurs when the group discusses adoption. Yolanda says to Bette, "it is only hard to adopt as a lesbian if you want a White baby." A Latina responds, "What is wrong with a White person wanting to adopt a Black baby?" Bette does not correct the mistake. Yolanda says to Bette, "You talk so proud about being a lesbian but you never once mentioned you're an African American woman." This example, while making clear the absurdity of biological notions of race, reminds us how often we use cultural knowledge to assert race as an identity. Sometimes, race is not clearly visible through skin color and other

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\(^8\) In season 2, Bette has a biracial (Black/White) child with Tina. The addition of a mixed race child forces the issue of race in particular ways. While this is important to analyze, we do not have the space in this manuscript to examine Seasons Two, Three, and Four.
physical traits (as in the case of Bette). If she wants to be identified as part Black, then she must assert herself as such.

15 As academics, we believe that people should be able to define themselves and, thus, we are not arguing that Bette must define herself as Black. We understand the ways racism has infiltrated understandings of race and miscegenation and invited the 'one drop rule.' Race is socially constructed. Some people, however, have fewer choices as to how they will define themselves. Bette has a choice and it bothers us that she chooses to privilege her Whiteness over her Blackness. In the above example, Bette becomes offended when she is accused of not living Black racial embodiment. She tells the woman, "You don't know how I've walked through the world." As viewers, we are tempted to believe that Bette has struggled to maintain an identity as a Black woman. The text up to this point, however, has yet to reveal this. As viewers, we are left wondering how exactly Bette has walked through the world.

16 Our argument is that Bette's refusal to 'out' herself as a Black woman promotes White privilege. Bette's visible and non-visible denial of her Blackness suggests that if she identifies with her Blackness she is no longer White and loses the privileges of her White existence. Bette's concealing of her Blackness privileges her Whiteness, and ultimately shames her Blackness. Omi and Winant contend that "assimilation was viewed as the most logical, and 'natural,' response to the dilemma imposed by racism" (17). Bette's character does not experience racism in the plush communities of Los Angeles; consequently, her 'lived' experiences center on her life as a lesbian and not as a woman of color who is also a lesbian.9 We can speculate whether Bette's absence of Blackness is intentional by the producers of The L Word; however, we know that mainstream culture values Eurocentric beauty over all other forms of beauty.

17 The aesthetics of the women depicted on The L Word embody the Eurocentric ideology of beauty that is entrenched within mainstream culture. The women on The L Word are portrayed as quintessential lesbians intended to eroticize White straight males' lesbian fantasies. This follows the trend of popular culture representations that heterosexualize lesbians by consistently producing the femme body—a body that is White, upper middle class, and embodies a hegemonic femininity.10 Watching The L Word, one is led to believe that all lesbians are White (even Bette). The L Word does not create a space for Black lesbians in mainstream culture. The women of The L Word are depicted in ways similar to Creed's argument about lesbian representation, "as if [lesbians are] mirror-images of each

9 Bette's character is also upper-middle class. While this certainly complicates the portrayal of Blackness, her socio-economic status would not, in the United States, insulate her from racism.
10 Ciasullo, 2001
other: identical faces, hair, clothes” (86). This portrayal leaves no room for Black faces on The L Word. All the women must look and act the same to be considered lesbians.

18 In 1993, supermodel Cindy Crawford graced the cover of Vanity Fair "shaving imaginary whiskers from the boyish, smiling lathered face of K.D. Lang, the out-lesbian country and western singer," (Creed 86) establishing that lesbians were tall, skinny, glamorous beautiful—White women. This epoch moment in popular culture established White lesbians as the prototype for all lesbians thereafter. Jenkins illustrates that the current wave in teen movies is to cast lesbians as "heterosexually desirable women" (492). The White lesbian characters who appear on The L Word are popular culture's means of privileging and normalizing one particular group of lesbians. These narrow depictions of what a lesbian looks like, we argue, are to stimulate and interest White heterosexual males. Through television shows like The L Word, Black lesbians and other lesbians of color are made invisible. This invisibility devalues the lesbian of color experience and further reifies White lesbianism.

19 One of the first issues we raised in the focus group was what people initially thought about the show. Lisa, the only White informant, explained that she and her girlfriend "had straight people come over and hang out with us...and they all came back. They wanted to watch it again." Devon, the 3rd grade teacher, said:

I wasn't able to get closer to the show because it didn't really do anything that I was familiar with. [Initially], I got really excited because I was thinking, 'Finally, there's an answer to Queer as Folk, the lesbian perspective.' And, I'm watching it and I really couldn't identify with it.

We further explored this issue of identification with the show and received a variety of responses, though all informants said they were displeased with the lack of racial diversity:

Every week I wanted to see if it was going to get better...I enjoyed it because it seemed like [the producers] sat around and said, 'Okay, what different types of lesbians [should we include]. They tried to make sure they incorporated all different kinds. It could have been more racially diverse I felt. But, as far as different types of us [lesbians], that was covered pretty well. (Natalie, middle school teacher)

There aren't too many types of racially diverse populations brought up into the show. (Toni, chef)

First, I don't feel that the Black lesbian community is represented in The L-Word. Pam [Grier]
is not really gay and Bette has major issues when it comes to being Black. So, I don't feel represented in *The L-Word*. (Pam, 4th grade teacher)

Of all the topics we explored during the 3-hour focus group, the topic of race was returned to again and again. We will explore further our informants’ comments throughout the body of the paper. Because our current interest is lesbian women of color and the representations of race and sexuality in *The L Word*, we examine Kit's character (Pam Grier) below, which Pam’s comment above cues. Given that Pam Grier became famous playing specific Black female roles, *The L Word* shifts the public's view of her, and possibly other Black women, through a particular racialized and sexualized stereotype that problematizes the overall stability of women of color. *The L Word*, as a pioneer in representing marginalized sexuality on cable television, falls short in addressing the marginalization of raced bodies.

**The Taming of Foxy Brown**

20 In the 1970's, Pam Grier was regarded as one of the sexist women in the movie industry. In 1974, Grier portrayed a sexy, fearless character named Foxy Brown, a woman who did not take 'no' for an answer. Before her role as Foxy Brown, she played the role of Coffy, a strong Black woman who fought against drug dealers and White power structures that oppressed Blacks in poor communities. A large majority of Grier's movie roles throughout her career have portrayed her as a strong, intelligent, sexy Black woman.

21 According to Roberts' *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, Black women's bodies have, throughout history, been represented, monitored, and regulated by a White supremacist patriarchal society. Roberts explains that "American culture is replete with derogatory icons of Black women—Jezebel, Mammy, Tragic Mulatto, Aunt Jemima, Sapphire, Matriarch, and Welfare Queen" (8). Even today, Black women's bodies are still (re)presented as grotesque, pathological, and deviant. Representations of the Black female body are still constructed by a White supremacist patriarchal society. Though the meanings of these bodies may change throughout different historical moments, one thing has remained constant. According to hooks, (re)presentations of Black women "seem to represent an anti-aesthetic, one that mocks the very notion of beauty" (71).

22 Black women (and Latinas) are often constructed against normative White femininity. Roberts argues that "whites are associated with positive characteristics (industrious, intelligent, responsible), while Blacks are associated with the opposite negative qualities (lazy, ignorant, shiftless)” (9). In the seventies, Grier depicted to mainstream culture what a strong Black woman embodied, but it is important to note that we do not intend to
romanticize these images for there were still racist and sexist subtexts. Our argument, however, is that Pam Grier is no longer playing a sexy, strong Black woman. Instead, she is the present day Aunt Jemima of *The L Word*. Pam Grier, once known as Foxy Brown—the essence of Black sexuality in the 70s—has become the desexed Sapphire and Aunt Jemima. Cornel West argues that

> The dominant myths draw black women and men either as threatening creatures who have the potential for sexual power over whites, or as harmless, desexed underlings of a white culture. There is Jezebel (the seductive temptress), Sapphire (the evil, manipulative bitch), or Aunt Jemima (the sexless, long-suffering nurturer). (119)

Unfortunately, there is not much diversity in the roles Black women can play on television and in film. This is especially evident on *The L Word*. 23 Portraying the only Black character on a lesbian based show is a far cry from the dominant roles of Foxy Brown and Coffy. Grier's character, Kit Porter, is the half sister of Bette, one of the main characters. We are continuously reminded that Kit and Bette are 'half sisters.' It is not clear why each of them refers to the other this way, especially upon introductions. It is, however, a defining feature of their relationship. Kit is an uneducated (Aunt Jemima), unemployed, manipulative (Sapphire), recovering alcoholic who was once a famous R&B singer (ironic). Kit's life is portrayed as a constant battle between good and evil: she habitually falls short of her goals, and she can never seem to reach the level of success of her White lesbian counterparts because of her educational, economic, and emotional shortcomings. Andrea Qeeley contends, "Black performers have always been pressured to perform the Blackness of the white imagination, and the Blackness is most often in the service of white supremacy" (4). Pam Grier's character perpetuates multiple negative stereotypes of Black women and reaffirms White negative perceptions of Blacks. *The L Word*’s narrow-minded generalizations of Black women are a result of the racial stereotypes that have been perpetuated by Eurocentric culture, which control the media. West contends that these myths and stereotypes "are part of a wider network of white supremacist lies whose authority and legitimacy must be undermined" (131). The first time Kit appears in *The L Word* strongly exemplifies of West's argument. She is pulled over by a White police officer and we learn that Kit is driving with a six month suspended driver license. Facing jail time or a pricey fine, Kit tries to bribe the officer with Aaron Neville concert tickets. She sweet-talks the officer and, instead of jail or a ticket, he impounds her car and gives her a ride to Bette and Tina's house. We find this scheme problematic for various reasons. First, since Kit is the only easily identified Black character on *The L Word*, to many viewers she is their weekly representation of Black culture. Kit's portrayal as a fast-talking, manipulative, recovering alcoholic
demonizes Blacks to the millions of viewers who may learn about Black culture through watching The L Word. Second, this scheme glorifies the White police officer since he does not take the concert tickets and ultimately goes out of his way to drop Kit off. He upholds his pure, egalitarian White standard while Kit seems irresponsible and corrupt.

24 Grier's character also bolsters the current myth of meritocracy. Sociologist Thomas M. Shapiro defines meritocracy as "the idea that positions are earned through hard work and personal achievement and through no resources other than one's own" (77). The principles of meritocracy are instilled in North America's very fabric; intertwined within the stars and stripes is the myth that everyone has the same opportunities for social and economic mobility, no matter one's skin color. Kit's poor decision-making and alcohol abuse are seen as the only reason behind her failures. The topics of racism and discrimination are never mentioned; Kit's shortcomings are never socially deconstructed to show societal injustice against Blacks, people of color, and gays and lesbians of all races. Gallagher observes, "whites view the opportunity structure as being open to all regardless of color...whites attribute racial inequities to the individual shortcomings of blacks" (4). Kit's lack of education, employment, and lengthy history of alcohol abuse reinforces White's negative views of Blacks, and legitimates Whites' rational for their racist views as they control what is Black through the media. According to Queeley,

From Birth of a Nation to Amos 'n' Andy to Good Times to Family Matters, the television and film industries are notorious for disseminating stereotypical depictions of Black people created by white writers and directors. (4)

Queeley illustrates hegemony in popular culture. White writers and directors disseminate negative and sectarian images of Black culture, of which, as mentioned above, all viewers make meaning. However, the images read and internalized by Blacks assist in their own oppression; too often, Blacks, as well as many other groups, learn what it is to be Black by reading popular culture images. These negative images of Blacks, therefore, are made a reality by Black viewers through 'lived' experiences.

25 On The L Word, Kit is powerless because of her inability to 'pull herself up by her bootstraps,' and live the American Dream. According to Kellner, "Radio, television, film, and the other products of the culture industries provide the models of what it means to be male or female, successful or a failure, powerful or powerless" (1). Thus, through Kit's character, White viewers consciously and unconsciously learn about Black culture. The L Word's representation of Black culture transmits negative ideological images. White media perpetuates negative Black stereotypes, which frame Blacks as deviant, nihilistic, pugnacious,
irresponsible, yet profitable for billion dollar corporations that want to market their products with Black faces to the masses, i.e. Nike, Sprite, Polo, Reebok, Verizon, etc.

26 As one views and interprets *The L Word*, the racial and cultural stereotypes are expressed to mainstream White America through pseudo diversity. *The L Word* is an apt example of Cornell West's contention that "[W]hite beauty plays a weightier role in sexual desirability for women in racist patriarchal America" (130). Grier's beauty, intelligence, and strength have been dismissed because of her skin color; the scope of her beauty is only known to those who still call her Foxy Brown.

27 Negative Black representation was an issue that our focus group informants discussed at length. In response to the counseling session we mentioned previously, Maxine, a lawyer, said:

> The Black person in me wants to say, of course, I don't want to see us portrayed in that manner on television or for other people who don't have the definition of what it means to be Black and see something like that.

Devon, a 3rd grade teacher, said:

> I wasn't so much offended by the counseling episode or by her [Yolanda's] role in the counseling episode. I guess for me it goes back to the fact that you don't have any representation of anyone else. It was episode nine and this is the first character who comes on the show as a Black woman. The first one? In episode nine? And it's a bad representation. It goes back to the lack of representation period. That's where I was more so offended. Not by what she said or what she did but how she was written into the script.

Pam, a 4th grade teacher, articulated her feelings:

> Everyone's speaking about the counseling session. I kind of identify with that sister because many times I know I get very loud when I'm saying something and if I responding to someone. If I sit up and I start saying, 'But, no, this is what I feel. . .' It's, 'Pam's angry.' And, no, I'm not angry. I'm passionate about what I'm talking about. I can identify with her because she wasn't angry. She was letting them know how she felt.

Pam went on to explain that she took offense to how, as often happens in her own lived experience, the White counseling session members misinterpreted Yolanda's passion for anger. She felt that the producers could have handled this episode with more complexity, but she was still "happy they did spend the episode on race because a lot of times we don't see that discussion on television."

**We Never Knew Being a Lesbian Was So Easy . . .**
Sedgwick, in *Epistemology of the Closet*, was one of the first queer theorists to discuss how homosexuality is often forcibly assimilated into the dominant heterosexual gestalt. This process of disavowal allows lesbian and gay difference to be erased. We see this occur on *The L Word*. Of course, the storyline includes the usual gay or (lesbian) topics like ‘coming-out,’ gay adoption, and lesbian pregnancy. We argue, however, that the bulk of the show portrays lesbianism as a fun social past-time, not necessarily a lived identity. For example, all of the main characters exist in a tight social network. Some are currently living together as lovers and some are ex-lovers, but they are all friends. They meet, apparently, every morning at a local café for lattes and breakfast. They also dine at expensive restaurants, socialize at one another's houses, and celebrate one another's milestones. Nothing illustrates the complex nature of their bond more so than when Tina discovered Bette cheated on her. Tina showed up at Alice's (Bette's ex-girlfriend) house and asked to spend the night. Bette's affair polarized the group. Even Bette's own ex-girlfriend, now a friend of both Tina and Bette, supported Tina. Bette was ostracized for a while, but eventually came back into the circle of friends when she proved her devotion to Tina and their unborn baby.

All of the friends, including Shane who was once homeless, earn a decent living and live well enough to have large amounts of expendable income. Good things continuously come their way. In fact, Dana, a professional tennis player, was actually offered an endorsement deal with Olivia Cruises. Olivia is a ‘real life’ company offering cruises for lesbians. None of the characters face real economic hardships. Jenny, a woman transitioning to lesbianism, began living with Shane during the second season. In order for them to meet the rent, they ended up needing a roommate. This was the extent of economic struggle.

Just as economic hardship is not represented within Season One, neither are issues and concerns pertaining to homophobia. None of the characters speak about homophobia because presumably none of them experience it. While we understand that the goal of popular culture texts may not be to portray 'reality,' we argue that oppression is something all lesbians, regardless of race or economic status, will have to face. We are talking about institutionalized oppression which stems from heteronormativity. *The L Word* has examined personal instances of homophobia. It is important to note that Dana, a professional tennis player, structures her life around the fear of being revealed as a lesbian. While this certainly is an example of homophobia, the show does not take up the issue in a complex manner. While there is portrayal of Dana's fear of being "discovered" and examples of the many ways she must

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11 Sheryl Swoops, a WNBA basketball player who recently 'came out' as a lesbian is now a spokeswoman for Olivia.
masquerade as straight, these portrayals are often at the expense of a laugh. Viewers laugh as Dana pretends to have a boyfriend. They laugh when her brother terrorizes her about revealing her secret to their parents. As viewers, we are witness to her personal struggles but there is never a discussion of the social consequences of her choices. Her personal struggle is never contextualized as a societal one.

31 By examining personal homophobia at the exclusion of the more powerful institutionalized oppression, however, The L Word propagates that being a lesbian is not fraught with difficulties caused by heterosexuality being viewed as normative. As lesbians of color, our 'lived' experiences are a testament to the institutionalized oppressions lesbians face in a heteronormative society. As professionals who pursue the so-called American Dream, we are in a constant battle to obtain the rights and privileges of our single or married heterosexual colleagues. For example, at every momentous occasion in our lives, such as homeownership, birth of a child, or job advancement, our relationships are either scrutinized by a society that only privileges heterosexual accomplishments or made completely invisible, as if our girlfriends and lovers do not exist. The L Word's portrayal of a perfect world denies the very real problems we face as lesbians of color who exist in a world that privileges Whiteness and heterosexuality. Wouldn't it be interesting if we learned that Shane, like so many other gay teenagers, became homeless because her parents threw her out of the house when they discovered she was gay? Or, wouldn't it be beneficial to see one of the characters have to address the often routine question, 'what is your husband's name?' Instead, they remain isolated from this discrimination and normativity.

32 Maxine was the only informant who spoke on The L Word's assimilationist tactic. She said:

I don't personally care for what I think is the underlying heterosexual, stereotypical and patriarchal tension between promiscuity and being faithful. This comes out through the characters a little bit between Marina and Jenny and Shane. They're like, 'Screw values.' And then you have the contrast of Bette and Tina kind of like emulating normalcy and heterosexuality.

Here Maxine argues that The L Word participates in the privileging of heterosexuality by showcasing Tina and Bette, long term partners, as the most stable couple of the show. Jenny, in contrast, is cheating on her boyfriend with Marina. Shane is also non-monogamous and is known for her fear of commitment. She often only has sex with a woman once before she moves on to her next conquest.

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12 Bette and Tina end their relationship by the end of the first season. Subsequent seasons portray them dating others. Bette continues life as a lesbian. Tina ultimately enters a relationship with a man.
Although this topic did not engender much discussion, informants were able to relate to the coming out story of Dana. The professional tennis player, Dana, was offered a lucrative endorsement deal which showcased her skill as an athlete but also her lesbianism. As the advertisement went in print, Dana was faced with the formidable task of 'coming out' to her conservative, right-wing parents. The idea of 'coming out' "gives expression to the dramatic quality of privately and publicly coming to terms with a constructed social identity" (Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen 9). 'Coming out' involves a notion of previously living in the 'closet,' hiding one's sexuality in order to avoid persecution. As Seidman, Meeks, and Traschen argue:

> The era of the closet has not passed. Representations continue to typify the homosexual as polluted and civic and social disenfranchisement and violence structure gay life in the US. As a set of practices responding to the repressive logic of normative heterosexuality, the closet continues to organize the lives of many Americans. (27-28)

This 'coming out' process seemed taken-for-granted by our informants as they unquestionably identified with Dana's 'coming out' process. Her storyline allowed informants to discuss their own coming out stories:

> It was scary for me to tell my mom. I didn't tell my dad because he's in the country and it's just a whole different mentality. Those are things that you just don't do. You're just not like this [gay]. (Devon)
> [After I sent emails to my sisters], I used to go on and be like, 'Damn, I didn't get a response,' and I'm always checking. Refresh, refresh and then I finally wrote again and I said, 'Well I'm assuming you don't want to be my sisters anymore. One of my sisters wrote me right back and said, 'I've just been busy and I didn't get a chance. I don't care what you are. You're still my sister. I still love you.' But then there was another email from my oldest sister who said, 'You are going to rot in hell.' I mean, all this stuff. I'm at work and I'm like, '(Gasp) I'm going to lose my sister.' (Pam)
> But, what about when they say, 'I still love you?' Are you committing some kind of crime? You know, 'I love you anyway.' (Tracy)

The informants went on to compare their coming out stories with Dana's. Some even examined how, like Bette, they often feel the need to overcompensate in professional accomplishments to earn their parents' respect. It was clear that the informants, although they found other faults with *The L Word*, found something they could unmistakably identify with.

**Identity Politics**

Because readers of popular culture texts may make meaning in multiple ways, we do not argue that *The L Word* should not exist. Rather, we are excited to see a show that examines the lives of lesbians. Additionally, it is a show that includes the important ways lesbians create communities of family, friendship, and support. But, because so few
representations of lesbians exist, it becomes ever more important that we continually critique those that do. With that being said, we would like to explore one way *The L Word* might be read as a progressive text. *The L Word*, in its creation of a male lesbian, Lisa, has taken a decidedly postmodern stance on identity. Lisa, a White male, identifies completely as a lesbian. He becomes Alice's, the only bisexual character, girlfriend. Apparently, even though Lisa has a penis, he does not engage in phallic sex. Alice says to Lisa, "You do lesbian better than anyone I know." In this sense, *The L Word* might be a site to work out tensions between essentialists who argue that our bodies are marked with identities and postmodernists who argue that identity is fluid. The idea of a biological male (and he does not alter his male appearance in any way) choosing to be a lesbian is a postmodern phenomenon. Lisa exists to show identity as a fluid choice, as something not fixed.

When Alice began dating Lisa a few of the characters raised their eyebrows about his obvious biological male status, but no one said anything to Alice. Although the definition of lesbian has been problematized in some lesbian films, the idea of a man identifying as a lesbian is a new concept to popular culture. It could have been a chance to bring lively debate about who a lesbian is and discuss concepts of male privilege. Instead, we were introduced to Lisa and she/he became a character to laugh at. The focus group informants were not necessarily excited to see the male lesbian explored on the show:

I see myself in her [Alice] in that aspect. Not the fact that she likes to date men that think they're lesbians, or anything like that. That's just wrong. (Tracy, elementary school teacher) That was a mistake. (Maxine)
Yeah that was gross. (Tracy)

This exchange was not explored in more depth because the conversation quickly shifted to the women Dana dated. Although informants' perspectives have, up until this point, been consistent with ours, it is clear that Lisa—the male lesbian—was not appreciated by our informants as a postmodern celebration.

Although Lisa's character certainly complicates the otherwise homogeneous portrayal of lesbians on *The L Word*, we are not completely satisfied with how *The L Word* has dealt with identity politics within the (White) lesbian community. It is not accidental that all of the characters of *The L Word* embody versions of femininity. As we argued earlier, the characters are feminine in order to attract a heterosexual male audience. This tactic, we thought, might maximize profits of *The L Word* by encouraging a larger viewing population. Upon reflecting on media interviews with the producer of *The L Word*, it became clear to us that her reality is

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13 *Go Fish* produced by Rose Troche examined lesbians who have sex with men.
a world of rich White feminine lesbians. The characters she has created are women she claims live in Los Angeles. We, however, argue that these may be the women who live in the producer's reality of Los Angeles but they do not represent the lesbian population (in LA or anywhere else).

37 We have already discussed the lack of racial diversity on the show. We also are displeased with the lack of stud, butch, and dom identities. Of the seven focus group informants, two identified as 'stud' while five identified as 'femme.' When the topic of Shane (the 'butch' character) came up, it sparked a lively discussion:

Shane was still kind of girly. . . She was really just about sex and she wore tight clothes and she still revealed her body a lot. My friends who are in the butch category aren't like that. (Devon)
I think there should be a whole different butch, like stud type [represented on the show]. (Toni)
She doesn't represent me. She doesn't represent most doms who I know. Not the ones in here. I don't know many doms or people who consider themselves to be doms who have the tight clothes. (Pam)
Naked. (Toni)
She's naked during sex. I mean she looked like a femme when she was [having sex]. (Pam)

38 Our stud/dom participants made decisions about whether they believed Shane represented them based on her appearance and her role during sex. By examining Shane's role during sex (active versus passive) to determine her identity within the category homosexual, our informants illustrate the various ways sexuality is gendered.14 Shane wore tight women's clothing, which contradicted the look of our stud/dom participants who opted for loose fitting men's clothes. In addition, Shane was naked during sex, which contradicted the lived experiences of our participants as many believed the stud/dom should keep on some of her clothes. The L Word portrayed Shane as sexually voracious. She is afraid of commitment and moves from one woman to the next.15 Her representation as a butch is not complex as she seems to portray what are traditionally considered "masculine" values about sex. The L Word has not troubled what it means to be a butch in a heteronormative world. How do butch women negotiate their identities when they are perceived by the larger heterosexual population as being women who want to be men or at least have some of the perks of heterosexual men? This remains unproblematicized by the show.

39 Although butch/femme identities have been conceptualized within the academic world as a class phenomenon, we believe there is an important racialized aspect to these identities.

15 In Season Three, however, Shane does fall in love with a Mexican femme, Carmen. Although Shane cheated on her, they eventually scheduled a commitment ceremony. Shane, however, stands Carmen up at the altar.
We know many middle class and upper-middle class professionals (educators, lawyers, physicians) of color who live out stud/dom/butch/femme identities. These identities are integral to "The way that we live." Though we cannot in the space of this paper deal with the complex issue of butch/femme identities, we want to voice that femme/femme couples (or stud/stud) are a rare occurrence in the lesbian worlds we inhabit. We encourage the producer of the show to expand her knowledge base about diversity within the lesbian community across race and class. Maxine posed the question, "What obligations does this White creator have particularly to this show? To present us?" Tracy persuasively responded:

I can't get offended anymore. . . I just look at it as, 'You don't know who I am. You don't know my background. You don't know my people. So, therefore, you need to go do some research before you can go speak on me. . . I cannot expect a White person to know who Black people are fully to represent them. So, what they see is on television, what they hear from their friends, what they read in the newspaper. That's what they're going to [think] unless they do some real research. And, I was surprised that Blacks were not represented on [The L Word] because there are a lot of Black people in the lesbian community. The writers could have gone out and interviewed a few people, just like you guys are talking about the show. They could have went out and done that and even gotten input from gay Black people. And been like, 'Okay, what do you think? How should this be represented and happen in the show?' But then again, it could not happen really for us.

We would like to end Tracy's words because they summarize the power of popular culture representations. It is obvious from the lived experiences of the informants as well as the cultural theorists we have cited that representations matter because they teach us about ourselves and others. The L Word is a site that teaches about race, gender, class, and sexuality and, thus, it cannot be ignored.

Since we first began writing this manuscript, The L Word has aired Seasons 2, 3, and 4. Of course, a cultural studies analysis of these texts is necessary. We believe, however, that Season One is important to examine on its own. It was advertised as the inaugural response to gay men's Queer as Folk, also produced by Showtime. We suspect countless viewers may have watched Season One to get an idea of what the lesbian lifestyle is like. However, many viewers, like our focus group participants, may have discontinued their viewing because they could not find something with which to identify. There are also the viewers who remain riveted by the series' storylines and learn, with every episode, how a group of White middle-class lesbians 'live and love.' This living and loving is a narrow representation and is, therefore, in need of continual cultural critique.

Works Cited


Male Gaze and Racism
By Norbert Finzsch, University of Cologne

Abstract:
I would like to present some considerations for a re-positioning of the concept of the male gaze that could lead to a decentering of this much-used construction. In a second move I will try to transfer these reflections onto the concept of racism, thereby aiming at a more thorough understanding of what intersectionality actually means.

Introduction
1 I would like to present some considerations for a re-positioning of the concept of the male gaze that could lead to a decentering of this much-used construction. In a second move I will try to transfer these reflections onto the concept of racism, thereby aiming at a more thorough understanding of what intersectionality actually means.
2 My theoretical justification for this course of action is derived from the fact that practices and discourses that are linked intimately with sexisms on the one hand and with racisms on the other cannot be conceived of separately but must be thought of as interdependent. (Becker; McClintock)
3 1975 was a special year in the history of the concepts of the male gaze and racism, for it marks both the publication of Michel Foucault's seminal book Surveiller et Punir and the first printing of Laura Mulvey’s path-breaking essay on the male gaze in Hollywood cinema. (Foucault Surveiller/Discipline; Mulvey Visual) While it is the controlling gaze of the invisible prison guardian that receives attention in Foucault’s book, Mulvey focused on a critique of the male gaze of the camera in Hollywood produced movies. Whereas Foucault conceptualizes the gaze as a form of societal power at the brink of modernity, Mulvey perceived the male gaze as a means to present the female body as an object for a voyeuristic and sexist practice of the spectators.

Laura Mulvey
4 Mulvey's short text can be summed up as follows: Hollywood movies fascinate through the narration of a coherent plot. From an explicitly psychoanalytic viewpoint, based on Freud’s "Three contributions to the Sexual Theory" Mulvey argues that that cinema provides visual pleasure through scopophilia and identification with the on-screen male actor. Mulvey argues that Freud's psychoanalytic theory is the key to understanding why film creates a space where women are viewed as sexual objects by men. According to Mulvey, the
combination of the patriarchal order of society and looking as a pleasurable act (voyeurism) create film as an outlet for female sexual exploitation.

5 Voyeurism according to Freud is an aberration or perversion in comparison to a fully heterosexual identity. At the same time Freud insists that in voyeurism the sexual aim is present in an active and a passive form. (Freud) Following Freud, Mulvey breaks scopophilia down into an active part, which is always male, and a passive part, which is always female. Women are the objects that are looked at.

6 At the same time the female image in narrative cinema of Hollywood bears in itself a threat to male viewers, which Mulvey equates with castration anxiety. Against castration anxiety, the only remaining antidotes are the inspection of the woman and her demystification, or the defense that transforms woman into a fetish. Expressing this fetishization is, for example, the female Hollywood star system in which the actual attention of the audience is focused on the female stars. Scopophilia thereby is the power which determines the camera perspective of the film. According to Mulvey, all spectators would be forced to assume a male gaze perspective through a male camera perspective, because the cinematic apparatus or the cinematic dispositif is not gender neutral. In the context of Mulvey’s analysis the gaze regime of the cinema was principally equated with the male gaze, whose voyeurism was fed by mainstream narrative cinema, turning the woman into an object of its scopophilia.

7 Mulvey had found that the patriarchal unconscious in Hollywood cinema activated a series of binary sexual oppositions, thus contrasting the male|female, the active|passive, the sadistic|masochistic and the narrative|contemplative.

The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness (Visual 203).

The woman in Hollywood represents the castration phobia of male viewers, to be revoked only in a voyeuristic investigation of the female body. Mulvey herself summed up her approach as follows: The film audience has a voyeuristic relationship with the female eroticized picture.

This look, I claimed, is transmuted into that of the male protagonist looking at the eroticized women within the fictional world of the narrative. I also argued that the very perfection of his image was a defense against castration anxiety that the body of the woman may generate. (Some Thoughts 16)
Mulvey’s approach has gained great importance for feminist research and feminist historiography. The “male gaze” approach haunts both literary and historiographical research, often without a consideration of the specific criteria and conditions of Mulvey’s theory. David Sorfa has pointed out that Mulvey’s essay was primarily a political manifesto, and Mulvey herself declared in 1996 in hindsight: "Film theory of the 70s was political and polemical, and, in this spirit, argued that cinematic illusion worked as a total belief system at the expense of its ability to balance belief with knowledge" (Fetishism 9).

Mulvey’s theses have undergone a critical revision in the following years, in which the film theoretician herself participated actively. In 1993 she published an essay in which she explicitly pointed at the liberating power of an investigation, which postulated a difference between the image and the object, which it claimed to represent. Thus, images were unstable and their meaning was no longer locked or permanently inscribed. Semiotics and Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis were used as a reference point for film theory. Semiotics could show that signifier and signified did not stand in a fixed relationship to each other. In analogy to the sign, the picture, therefore, had a signifier, but the signifier is not automatically synonymous with the iconic signified. (Some Thoughts 3)

The decoupling of the picture and its alleged content finds a correlation in the post-fordist economy. Unlike in the era of industrial capitalism, in which added value was created in the first line through the exploitation of labor performed by dependent employees, the postmodern economy evolved into a system in which the increasingly rapid circulation of capital itself seems to generate new capital. Money, which hitherto had served as a symbolic representation of value, is now tied into an economic exchange process in which money does not necessarily represent commodities or objectified labor time. (Some Thoughts 4) Thus fails the old form of representation or referentiality and the relationship between signifier and signified identifier destabilizes further. If history is constructed from representations, then the question arises whether these representations can be relocated to the social forces, which have generated them.

In relation to film theory, Mulvey suggests that the dissolution of a seemingly understandable reality as it is achieved by the Hollywood studio system, with its stars and its narrative storytelling tradition, also discharges within new forms of cinema, in which the spectator is relocated from the darkness of the cinema palace into the brightness of the living room, where videos and DVDs have replaced the movie theater.

At the same time, Hollywood cinema has become self-referential. Citations, intertextuality and ironic references to other films, books and media are on the agenda,
according to Mulvey. Thus popular culture becomes postmodern culture, in which a game with cause and effect takes place, a joyful interchange between text and allusion, thus making a linear narrative plot impossible to develop — as Dana Polan observes. Polan explains the effect of a quotation of a text by Michel Foucault in an episode of the US soap opera "West Wing" with the term "Savvy TV."

Savvy television often operates at the self-delighted expense of the very audience it is setting out to captivate. It dares one to spot the reference, to solve the puzzle. Its tactics often seem particularly tricky for the academic television analyst who can find his/her best insights turned into amusing fodder for mockery, deconstruction, and ironic reversal in the shows themselves. (*Foucault TV*)

13 Feminist film analysis has developed in the light of radically changed conditions of production and consumption of film. The idea of fetish, to which women were deduced in Hollywood cinema of the 50s, 60s and 70s, was taken to another level within postmodern cinema. In a psychoanalytic perspective, fetishization is based on the endowment of an object with self-sufficient power. The fetish depends on the ability of the defense of the real subject and its transformation into an object, presumed to have the same properties as the defended subject.

14 The typical sentence of a fetishist accordingly goes: "I know all this very well, nevertheless..." (*Mannoni* 9-33). Accordingly, the process of fetishization is fragile and prone to malfunctions because it is culturally and historically changeable. This critique puts into question the dichotomization of male activity and female passivity of many film theorists. A female spectator would not appear in Mulvey’s work at all. Mulvey’s apparent essentialism in her early essay was also criticized: According to these critics, audience and masculinity would be treated as immutable, trans-historic entities, thereby tunneling the analysis to a white, heterosexual male spectatorship.

15 In 1983 E. Ann Kaplan asked "Is the gaze male". Both Kaplan (*Women; Looking*) as well as Kaja Silverman (*Masochism*) argued that the gaze could be taken by both, women and men. The man was not always in control, the woman is not always passive. Teresa de Lauretis insisted that one could read the male gaze also against the grain. (*Alice*) The female spectator does not simply assume a male reading, but operates always in a double identification with the active and passive subject positions. Jackie Stacey doubted the automatic combination of femininity and masculinity with female and male viewers’ positions: "Do women necessarily take up a feminine and men masculine Spectator position?" (245). And why should there exist only one female and one male spectator position? What about gay and lesbian viewers?
Steve Neale identified the gaze in Hollywood films not primarily as male, but primarily as heterosexual. Even if in a heterosexist patriarchal society the homoerotic gaze has to be legitimized specifically, by making a male body only implicitly the object of a homosexual gaze regime, the presence of the gay gaze could not be denied. (281) Neale delivered a queer-theory reading of movies, by showing, how the gaze regime in films could alternate between male and female protagonists.

Subsequently, the theory of queer viewing was then developed by Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gamman. Both Neale as well as Richard Dyer criticized the idea that the man would never be sexually reified in mainstream cinema. The man would not always be the observer, who exercised control over the gaze. Since the 1980s, one could also observe an increasing representation and sexualization of the male body in film and television. (Moore, Evans & Gamman, Mort, Edwards)

In some ways, one could say that the difference between seeing and being seen — has overlaid, perhaps even usurped gender differences. Masculinity is defined through gaze, femininity identified by to be looked-at-ness. It is certainly important to note that this defining power of the gaze is not limited to heterosexual relations (just as it does not automatically occur in every heterosexual relationship). It also characterizes the correlation of same-sex relationships. The key is the recognition that the viewer, because of the way in which the mechanical eye penetrates the object, is thought as a male and the looked-at object is perceived as a female and that this form of perception moves across gender boundaries and the self-perception of the individual. (Brown 9, my translation, N.F.)

Jacques Lacan had shown that the subjugation under the regime of being seen pertains to all subjects, if perhaps not equally. We all — in order to be considered as subjects — need to be seen from the outside:

I must, for the beginning, insist on one point there — on the field of vision the gaze is outside, I am being gazed at, which means I am picture / tableau. This is the function, by which the institution of the subject as the visible can be most deeply grasped. Basically the exterior gaze determines me within the visible. By the gaze I am enter the light, and by the gaze I partake in the effect of the gaze. It shows that the gaze constitutes the instrument through which the light embodies itself, and it is for this reason that I am ( . . . ) photographed. (113, emphasis in the original)

For Lacan vision has clearly a chiasmatic or crossed nature: the way that the gaze proceeds from the subject and also to the subject from "outside" (106; McGowan).

In her reading of Lacan film theoretician Kaja Silverman addresses his separation of sight/regime/gaze/le regard and look, meaning the embodied, interwoven in desire l'oeil/eye and shows that the voyeuristic, male objectifying gaze only supposedly coincides with the
gaze regime: "[A]ll binarisations of spectator and spectacle mystify the scopic relations in which we are held" (*Male Subjectivity*)

(to) denaturalize the alignment of masculinity with the gaze. (…) What must be demonstrated over and over again is that all subjects, male or female, rely for their identity upon the repertoire of culturally available images, and upon a gaze which, radically exceeding the libidinally vulnerable look, is not theirs to deploy. (153)

According to Silverman, no subject is actually and fully in a position to adopt the gaze, it can only be staged as if. Between the gaze regime and the eye (seeing) Lacan puts an intermediary body: the screen. Silverman defines the screen as a culturally generated image repertoire in the shape of the camera. This image repertoire is unique in each of us, "similar to the language", it provides us with "presentation parameters" (*Blickregime* 58), that structure of our perception, they determine "what and how the members of our culture perceive — how they process the visible and the importance they give it" (58). The subject is not the center or the origin of visual perception; it is, to the contrary, determined by the visual codes of a culture. (Mathes 99).

In the following, I would like to "take into view" the aspect of desire, and to debate how it can usurp the power of the intercepting, voyeuristic gaze. Silverman shows that the investedness of the gaze in structures of desire as *look* prevents the look from becoming identical with the gaze. The desire, which lures the subject to peek through the keyhole, cannot just be understood as a visual pleasure of an active male subject of the gaze of the subject, "that exercises his power when gazing at the female object using photographic technology" (Williams 67).

As Linda Williams has shown in her research on pornography, the focus on only one form of visual desire fails to encompass the complexity of the issue. Williams critiques the description of the male desiring gaze on pornographic photos as disembodied powerful vision, suggesting visual possession. This possession remains imaginary. For Williams the eroticism of the viewing beholder represents a new level of physicality and not the passive submission to the power of images or their voyeuristic mastery. (Williams 75) The voyeur must realize that his secret, always coveted view always contains the risk of being looked at himself. The object of the gaze can reciprocate the gaze and look back. (For a summary of gaze theories see Elkins 26)

**Alternatives to the voyeuristic gaze**

Mulvey has historicized and relativized her own approach in her late work. Her analysis generated out of specific historical conditions of production and a historico-material
film dispositive, as well as a certain political practice at a time when feminist and socialist utopias could claim their request for practicability. The film had to be viewed, for example, in the darkness of a movie theater, in which a heavily bundled light lit the screen so that viewers could retreat into the total immersion of a privileged vision and assume — in the midst of other viewers — that he was alone. Add to this the production conditions of the Hollywood cinema with its star system in which female stars were eroticized and objectified. This voyeuristic approach has meanwhile been replaced and supplemented by other models of looking.

24 Mulvey developed a distinctive concept of the "curious spectator", an audience or a spectator, "driven by curiosity and a desire to decipher the images unfolding on the screen" (Past to Present 1289). This curious spectator was again a historical product that emerged in the discursive network of feminism and the avant-garde, grounded on a deliberately different relationship to cinema. This curious spectator is needed for the genealogy of another type of viewing, in which, thanks to the digitalization of the picture, an experimental approach to the technical apparatus of filmmaking has become possible. This means, among other things, a weakening of the pure narrative cinema in favor of other narrative registers, which have enhanced the documentary mode of the cinema. Narrative coherence is shaken in this way, chronology is broken and as a consequence, the master narrative is difficult to realize in film. Thus history can be problematized in film history, evoking a new type spectator, "the pensive spectator", a concept borrowed from Raymond Ballour by Mulvey, but originally stemming from Roland Barthes. (Past to Present 1289, 1292)

25 Roland Barthes tried to distinguish between film and photography. While in the moving images of a film the present and the present tense reigned, it was the immobility, the past and a certain absence that prevailed in photography. On the one hand, there is the acceptance of the illusion, while on the other hand, we have the quest for the hallucination. Here is a fleeting image that takes us as if in flight, there is a complete and immobile picture that cannot be grasped completely. On one hand the doubling of life through time, on the other hand the return of the time touched by death — according to Barthes.

26 In 1987 Raymond Bellour published an article in which he continued to argue along the observations made by Roland Barthes in 'Camera Lucida'. Through the digital revolution, it was now possible, to either freeze individual frames or to conduct formal experiments resulting in films consisting of stills in the form of "photo novels" or slide shows. The most obvious example is the short film "La Jute" by Chris Marker (1962), which served as inspiration for the film "Twelve Monkeys" by Terry Gilliam. Using Barthes’s findings
regarding the difference between film and photo, Bellour wondered what would happen if the viewer of a film is confronted with a photograph (Bellour).

27 Just as the early film theorists celebrated the film because it revealed more than was visible for the naked eye it seemed the pensive viewer could now discover more than was visible with a projection speed of 24 frames per second. In a reversal of Jean Luc Godard's famous definition of film as "truth 24 frames per second", there is another truth in the freezing of the moving image, dislocating it from the continuum of projection.

Racist (male) gaze

28 For an intersectional approach to racism, this has certain consequences. If racism according to George L. Mosse is a "visual ideology", more attention should be attributed to the standpoint of the observer in studies of racism. (Mosse 9) Gender is not the only criterion that determines the regime of the gaze. Race and Class are also decisive factors and must be conceptionalized as intersectional categories. (Lutz & Collins 365; Gaines; de Lauretis Technologies; Tagger; Traube) The ethnic background of spectators was the main factor in the different assessment of violence in film, as shown by the empirical study Women Viewing Violence. (Schlesinger et al.) As early as 1975, Michel Foucault already had in mind a more general theory of power in mind as one linked exclusively to gender, when he presented his ground-breaking study on the panoptic view. (Foucault Surveiller)

29 Meanwhile, the Foucauldian thesis about the pervasiveness of the panoptic view has been modified, yet the question of the normative vision remains virulent, especially if it is further enlarged/expanded to encompass distinctions intermingled with sexism. In the first instance, there exists research that deals with the ethnically/culturally/racially defined Other within the field of visibility and perception. These studies have shown that the invention of technical apparati is closely linked with a gazing subject that directs its gaze at an object without being perceived by the object. The observer’s gaze thus "defines" the Other (Note the similarities to early theories of the gaze!). "As God created humans in his image, the gazing subject defines the Other by his technical apparatus: not only "women", but also "Jews", "Blacks" or 'homosexuals" (Braun 82).

30 These visual codes seem to have an almost unlimited power of assigning meaning, but if we take into consideration the important critique of Mulvey’s early theories on the gaze, crucial distinctions regarding the alleged omnipotent power of the gaze are in order. It is therefore important to demonstrate the constructedness of the normative view, by lifting the veil of its unmarkedness and by naming it. Critical whiteness studies have revealed that the
supposed objectivity of the normative is a historical specificity: It is mainly male, white, and heterosexual.

31 The constructedness of the norm as norm is particularly visible if contrasted against the background of other norms and in times of "crises" as presented in Richard Dyer’s now classic essay "White". The films he analyzed show being-white in a legitimacy crisis, which is unable to unfold without criticism of the standard white norm, a criticism, however, "that in the face of the eventual re-establishment and affirmation coagulated to a wistful pose" (Warth 128). In the sources that I am about to quote, the readers will also find this combination of critical representation of the normative vision, which is restricted by affirmative moments in their subversive power. In my contribution, however, I will focus on the questioning of the racist and sexist gaze regime.

32 Film and literary scholars besides historians, myself included, have in the past placed too much emphasis on the unity of gaze, the gaze regime, and the look that is intertwined with desire (Klarer; Finzsch Discourses and Settler Imperialism). However, a one-sided analysis of this seemingly totalizing view runs the risk of reproducing within the empirical material that which it postulates as a theoretical model. This circular reasoning, which in the long run will always prove what it hypothetically assumes, can only be broken if other readings are authorized and legitimate. An alternative strategy of reading the racist gaze would consist of a deliberate search for signs of a non-normative view in which the racialized and sexualized Other is able to return the gaze.

33 Although it is true that in the majority of descriptions of white male explorers a gaze prevails in which the black female body is fixated and described in its alleged features, researchers have until now looked too little at the counter-discourses that resist the hegemonic construction of indigenous femininity as an objectified, available, sheer physicality. First, I will present some results of the research on gaze regimes in the history of colonialism in Australia and then proceed to search for alternative readings and interpretations as indicated above.

**Historical application**

34 In 2005, I examined a relatively extensive body of sources about the literature pertaining to the European discovery and colonialism in Australia. (Discourses) It consisted of 31 travel and discovery descriptions of white men, between the late 18th and the mid-19th centuries. I put great emphasis on the fact that these men had made their "observations" on the spot and had not quoted other descriptions left by third parties. My reading of these
sometimes lengthy sources was based on the assessment of the axes of evaluation of the indigenous Others, which I arranged in a matrix designed for conducting a discourse analysis.

This matrix contained 15 evaluation categories. I was looking for observations and remarks about religion or spirituality, about work, about the physical appearance of the indigenous population, for indicators of "civilization" and for the indigenous form of government. I browsed the sources for information on clothes, sexuality, gender relations, on morals and ethics, on property, on food, on language and orality, on the demography of the indigenous, on housing, on weapons and warfare, and on alleged cannibalism.

The matrix was based on the existing research on racist practices during the European colonization of Australia. (Gascoigne; Mosse; English, Van Toorn) It reflected the findings of Australian and American scholars on the importance of the Enlightenment discourse for the constitution of a pre-scientific racism based on the observation of indigenous corporeality. The matrix was no mere head-birth of a German historian in search of racist texts, but reflected the particular importance of external evaluation of indigenous bodies for the assessment of indigenous culture before 1860. In short, I tried a discourse analysis of contemporary white statements, in the sense of "happy positivism", which Foucault demanded in "L'Ordre du Discours".

One of the results of this study was that racialized discourse in Australia occurred in two phases, one before 1800 and thereafter. The pre-1800 discourse displayed a rather neutral image of the indigenous peoples. The discourse between 1800 to 1860 turned out to be an almost continuous condemnation of the Aborigines, which marked the transition to the implementation of a genocidal policy of relocation and dispersal. The indigenous population emerged from these sources as a collective that had no human properties.

In her introduction to "Bodies That Matter" Judith Butler described the constitutive Other as abject body that resides in the unlivable and uninhabitable zones of social life "which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the 'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the defining limit of the subject's domain" (Butler 3). Butler thus borrowed Foucault's definition of biopower. Biopower constituted a form of knowledge or power, which is inscribed on the surface of the body and which becomes visible in the body, especially with a panoptic gaze regime. Groups and individuals outside the desired effects of biopower are "unlivable", which means they are threatened to be defined as unworthy of life. Agamben described them as homines sacri (Agamben), discarded to be killed without legal intervention by the government. I argued that it was thus possible to exclude indigenous people from the realm of human life and to render
possible a policy of extermination and conquest, despite the lack of a biologist or Darwinist
notion of racism., despite the lack of biologist definition of racism in pre-modern societies As
much as I believe these results to be basically valid, as oversimplified they are. By searching
for the racist gaze in the sources, the result was predetermined in some way, according to the
Gospel of Matthew 7:7 "seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you". If
the gaze of the beholder is not cast unilaterally, but the beholden can counter his gaze, it must
be asked whether there are texts or pictures in which the indigenous stand up to the European
gaze or recast it onto the voyeuristic spectator.

39 This is more likely in instances that are not part of a continuous narrative or a movie,
in snapshots analogous to the state of a still or a frozen image of a movie. Hence, an analysis
of the gaze regime in the context of the early history of racism should focus on sources that
have the status of snapshots. (Virilio 55) Thus, travel descriptions as pure text have to be
excluded and one would have to concentrate on what has been conceptionalized as a
"viscouse". This is a concept coined by Karin Knorr-Cetina. Knorr-Cetina defined viscouse
as follows: "The concept of ‘viscouse’ is the interplay of visual images and their integration
into an ongoing communicative discourse" (247).

40 It is relevant for our purpose here that "visual images continually produce the unity
and scientific coherence of the field" (247). I would like to borrow her concept of viscources
and associate it with Foucault’s notion of discourse. (Siegfried Jäger, cited in Adelmann 100)
A viscouse analysis therefore aims at the capturing the visible in its qualitative bandwidth,
but also the media strategies and procedures with which the expanded field of the visible can
be expanded or restricted.

41 I want to give a few examples from the history of the European discovery of Australia.
Between 1837-1839 George Gray travelled on the coast of Western Australia and landed at
Hanover Bay, near Perth. (Gray) His observations were therefore historically beyond the
epistemic break of 1800, mentioned above. His "Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in
North-West and Western Australia" stand out because of its factual tone and the
accompanying illustrations that are devoid both of the look as defined by Kaja Silverman and
the pornography of humanitarian gaze that Mario Klarer and Karen Haltunnen have
discovered. (Klarer; Haltunnen) Gray notes the differences of indigenous and European
cultures, without trying to dissolve these differences in the image of the noble savage or
Greek classic aesthetics.
Edward John Eyre (1815-1901) undertook an expedition in 1840/41 at the end of which he published a text, which is explicitly aimed at a representation of indigenous Australian cultures. He was the first white person to traverse South Australia from Albany to Adelaide on foot, marching at least 2,000 miles or 3,200 kilometers, with his friend and indigenous leaders Wylie and two other Aboriginal men. (Eyre) He, too, looks almost neutral on the indigenous peoples, without Europeanizing or idealizing them.

Ludwig Leichhardt (1813-1848), one of the German pioneers of ethnographical research in Australia, disappeared 1848 during an expedition into the interior of Australia. He left, however, a travelogue, which helped settlers to advance into the interior of the continent. (Leichhardt) Leichhardt, too, travelled in the company of two Australian indigenous men, which made it possible for him to survive in the extremely arid land. In his report Leichhardt availed himself of an objective tone, and his drawings reveal that a patronizing or racist attitude is completely missing/absent.
In 1831/32 Major Thomas L. Mitchell (1792-1855) undertook an expedition on behalf of the British Government, during which he explored New South Wales and the later Victoria. The drawing on the first page of his report shows a scantily clad indigenous man, who does not avoid the artist’s and the viewer’s glance, but who looks back very self-confidently. Mitchell was conscious of this fact, because he titled this drawing "Portrait of Cambo, an Aboriginal Native." Here, the indigenous man does not only have a name, but a portrait of him has been made which clearly signifies his subject character.
If the readers gain the impression that in these more neutral depictions the female corporeality is largely omitted, this is not entirely unjustified. In discourses and viscourses alike, the picture of the promiscuous while unsightly indigenous woman dominated and thus indigenous female bodies were unspeakable. Only Mitchell depicts indigenous women, but never shown in the frontal, one may surmise, in order to avoid the representation of nudity which was discursively with the image of promiscuity. Here one can demonstrate by reference to what is not mentionable or sayable how viscourses determine the qualitative bandwidth of the visible, but also how media strategies and procedures expanded or restricted the field of the visible.

Fig. 5.

Summary
Starting from a feminist interpretation of the male gaze regime in Hollywood, cinema studies and research in the humanities have advanced a privileging of the voyeuristic male gaze beyond the theoretical debate about the Hollywood film. The feminist theory debate has, however, modified the importance of the male gaze in the years after 1975 and has formulated certain applicatory conditions for its effective use. At the same time, feminist theory has shown that due to changes in conditions of production and reception men may also become the object of voyeuristic gaze. The inclusion of the texts by Jacques Lacan and Roland Barthes has opened the possibility to assign subjectivity even to the gazed-at objects. The masculine look can be reverted, albeit not always as an equal. By concentrating on stills or drawings it can also be shown that besides the dominant racist discourse there is also a space for a more quiet discursive murmuring where the gaze regime does not demand submission, but grants the indigenous other the status of a subject.
Sources and Literature


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Racist Bullying or "Girls Being Girls"? Untangling Constructions of Race and Gender in Celebrity Big Brother

By Melissa Wright, University of Adelaide, Australia

Abstract:
It has been suggested that an integrated view of racism that focuses on its complex relationship with hierarchies of gender and class, and other such identity constructions is vital to understanding the differing ways in which racist structures and discourses perpetuate inequalities and resulting positions of oppression or privilege (Hoagland; Schloesser). This article looks at a recent example of what has been termed "racist bullying", which occurred in the 2007 UK Celebrity Big Brother series, and undertakes an examination of the racially privileged position held by the three British women who were accused of racism toward Bollywood actress, Shilpa Shetty. The analysis to follow investigates the manifestation of racism through the complex intersectionality of race and gender. More specifically, this paper will examine the ways in which particular rhetorical devices were deployed to justify the privileged position held by these three women, and the denial of this privileged position through an ongoing construction of "girls being girls".

1 The need to focus on what Anderson & Collins describe as "simultaneous and intersecting systems of relationship and meaning" (xiii) is an important aspect of the critical study of racism. Hook and other researchers within the area of critical psychology continue to suggest that locating racism as solely the product of a range of rhetorical devices fails to capture the complex and varying ways in which racism is enacted and how it impacts upon people – whether that be to oppress some or to privilege others. (Fine) One method for attempting to address issues of racism has been through a focus upon racial privilege, a concept that has been central to recent work in the field of critical race and whiteness studies. (Frankenberg; McIntosh; Moreton-Robinson; Riggs & Choi; Tannoch-Bland) As well as examining instances of racist ideologies, this approach has been instrumental in the deconstruction of underlying historical contingencies seen as responsible for taken-for-granted social systems and structures which simultaneously privilege "whiteness" and normalize or justify racist practices.

2 It has also been suggested that an integrated view of racism that focuses on its complex relationship with hierarchies of gender and class, and other such identity constructions, is vital to understanding the differing ways in which racist structures and discourses perpetuate inequalities and resulting positions of relative oppression and privilege. (Hoagland; Schloesser) Hage suggests that rather than ignoring the complex ways in which whiteness, if viewed as cultural capital, is variously distributed amongst a range of identity positions (i.e. gender, class, sexuality and ability), it is important to examine the differing
investments that people will hold in whiteness as a dominant cultural signifier. "Whiteness," from this understanding, is thus not solely the property of those identified as having white skin – it circulates as a form of cultural capital that while indeed primarily privileging those men identified as white, middle-class, heterosexual and able-bodied, nonetheless accords considerable privilege to a much wider range of individuals on the basis of their willingness, desire, or otherwise to appropriate particular social norms that serve to enshrine whiteness. As such is it important to examine how certain dominant perspectives of the world which are enshrined in social institutions regulate how we understand ourselves and the people we relate to. Burman in particular directs our attention to the way intersectional raced, classed and gendered discourses may be deployed in the service of nation and citizenship in a manner which primarily works to privilege "whiteness."

3 This paper adopts the approach outlined above to examine the workings of race privilege in the recent 2007 series of Celebrity Big Brother in the United Kingdom; a series which was wrought with controversy over allegations of racist bullying by former Big Brother contestant Jade Goody and two other British female housemates towards their fellow housemate, Bollywood star Shilpa Shetty. The key focus at hand is an examination of the privileged position of the three British women that investigates the manifestation of racism through the complex intersectionality of race and gender. More specifically, this paper will examine the ways in which particular rhetorical devices were deployed to justify the privileged position held by these three women, and the denial of this privileged position through an ongoing construction of "girls being girls." However, it is first necessary to elaborate more clearly the particular theoretical approaches to understanding race privilege and enactments of racism, and the contemporary intersection of identity categories adopted within this paper.

"Whiteness” and race privilege
4 Researchers are increasingly acknowledging the importance of addressing the underlying and resultant positions of relative privilege and oppression that acts of racism directly correspond to. Frankenberg is one such theorist who draws attention to the structural advantage, or racial privilege, which is linked to "whiteness" as an identity position. As indicated in the introduction, whilst "whiteness" is typically taken as referring to people identified as "white-skinned", an understanding of whiteness as "cultural capital" extends our focus to the benefits that a wide range of people not directly identified by the category "white" may be said to accrue. Thus, as Frankenberg aptly summarises: whiteness is "an
economic and political category maintained over time by a changing set of exclusionary practices" (11). Frankenberg also argues that whiteness is often defined by what it is not, and thus defined in relation to the boundaries which mark cultural groups as "racial others."

The unearned and unacknowledged racial privilege which is routinely awarded to those most able to identify and present as "white," both on the basis of skin colour and other forms of "cultural capital," is unearned and unacknowledged largely because it is continuously constructed (both structurally and discursively) as a normal and natural facet of societal functioning. In part, this is due to the way in which whiteness is typically regarded as racially neutral, or objective, and is by and large treated as the norm to which other cultures are compared and measured against. (Moreton-Robinson) As such, the role that white race privilege plays in the shaping of white people's identities and life experiences is largely unacknowledged both in the public sphere and in academia. (Frankenberg)

Discussions of "whiteness" have been usefully extended in the context of the United Kingdom to examine the ways in which the category "British" is deployed to warrant a sense of national belonging for particular groups of people, as claimed on the basis three different criteria: 1) British citizenship, 2) "racial" heritage and/or 3) shared cultural values. (Jacobson) Importantly, this research highlights that despite claims to the "cultural" location of "Britishness" as an identity, it is very much marked by a racialised logic wherein only particular groups of people (i.e., those seen as "white") are recognised as "authentic" British subjects. (ETHNOS Research and Consultancy; Jacobson) Furthermore, such constructions of belonging are generally deployed and maintained by those identified as white Britons. Thus, for example, we see use of the term "British" to refer to white British people (or at the very least those people who are accepted within this identity category), whilst a range of groups of people living throughout the UK are identified by "additive categories" (such as "British Pakistanis" or "British Muslims") (Jacobson). In much the same way as Frankenberg identified whiteness as an "unmarked and unnamed" (1) category, "Britishness" circulates as a racially unmarked category only for those who hold a sense of entitlement to the category itself. This sense of entitlement thus engenders a sense of righteous belonging in the face of British cultural diversity and a sense of ownership of British national space. This paper will later explore the way in which the claiming of a British identity allowed particular individuals within the Big Brother house to occupy and act from within a position of relative racial privilege.
Maintaining Racial Privilege

7 Racist practices and discourses typically function to maintain and justify existing relations whereby certain groups have power or dominance over other groups within society. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (viii) define racism as those "discourses and practices by which ethnic groups are inferiorized, excluded and subordinated." Accompanying the deployment of racism/race privilege through both discursive and institutional structures is the stereotypical construction of "otherness" that has come to define non-white, or culturally marginalised individuals. For some, "otherness" comes to evoke distrust and fear, whilst for those marked as "other," "otherness" means feeling "excluded, closed out, precluded, even disdained and scorned," at different times both invisible or overly conspicuous (Madrid 8).

8 Modern-day racism frequently involves what Frankenberg describes as "colour/power evasive" discourses, which present the view that all people are the same "under the skin" with equal chances of succeeding in life, but simultaneously imply that "any failure to achieve is therefore the fault of people of colour themselves" (14). Differences are relegated to specific cultural inferiorities, in contrast to what is implicitly (and at times explicitly) constructed as white cultural superiority. Ultimately, this discourse is as racially marginalising as more overt forms of racism based upon biological differences. Both of these discourses function to reify racial categories so they are again made to seem as though they reflect "real" or biological differences between people, rather than social differences which are the result of racialised power relations.

9 The strength of the colour/power evasiveness repertoire lies within the ability of those who are racially privileged to deny their privilege. The denial of racism allows racist behaviours to become acceptable and justified, working to legitimate white group dominance and superiority (Van Dijk). The claiming of a collective non-racist identity allows white people to deny that they are privileged on a racial basis, and furthermore puts forward the idea that any privilege granted to white people is earned and possibly the result of "natural" superiority (Anthias & Yuval-Davis). Similarly, certain aspects of "cultural capital" such as nationality (i.e. British ancestry), often presumed to be definitively indicated by white skin, are made to appear as something that cannot be achieved, but rather a birthright (Hage). Riggs and Augoustinos suggest that rather than focusing on the effects of racism alone, it is equally important to "focus [on] hegemonic practices/structures of racism, and their imbrication in the formation of white subjectivities" (462). In other words, rather than regarding race as a "natural" category in all facets of everyday life, it is necessary to understand how people
construct intelligible identities for themselves within racial discourses, and how this leads to the reification of particular racial identities.

As such, it has increasingly come to the fore that racism must not only be regarded as related to racial identities, but also in relation to other forms of identification, such as gender and class. Ware, for example, investigated two racist events situated in England, and ultimately asks why racism comes to be represented almost exclusively by imagery of white, working-class, male violence, directed toward black, working-class males. Ware suggests that the absence of women and/or people of other classes within such depictions raises questions about the potential invisibility of racism beyond that reported to exist amongst working-class white men in the UK. By construing racism on such a one-dimensional level, the underlying historical and cultural contexts in which racism and white race privilege are situated are ignored, and white race privilege is reified and normalised. Accordingly, it is important to explore the ways in which racial identity constructions have historically evolved in their relationship to other identity constructions, in particular gender, before applying the discussed theoretical approaches to the events in the Big Brother house.

**Contemporary Intersections of Race and Gender**

A particularly informative investigation into the historical intertwining constructions of gender and race underlying the establishment of modern-day patriarchy was carried out by Pauline Schloesser. She discusses how early constructions of gender in US society were inextricably linked to constructions of race, making white women a key site through which both patriarchal and racial conventions were established and maintained. Drawing on previous research into the patriarchal subordination of women in the early American Republic, Schloesser extends this to show how white women as signatories to sexual and marriage "contracts" became simultaneously privileged and oppressed. By conforming to the rules stipulated by patriarchy, white women were dually positioned as racially privileged via their association with white men, in return for a subordinate gender position. Schloesser defines this as a structure of racial patriarchy; "a pecking order among persons that came into being in the early period of U.S history[. . .][which] takes into account race as well as gender as organizing principles" (14). This dual positioning of white women was found in various "fair sex" ideologies circulating at the time, an ideology encompassing both the "dangerous sexuality" of females to be controlled and contained by white men, alongside notions of the "weaker" more feminine sex, but also referring to "light skin tone, civilized beauty, and moral purity" (Schloesser 54). The term "fair sex" was generally deployed to describe white women,
effectively excluding non-white women from the category of universal womanliness, and consequently from identifying as civilized beings. "Racial patriarchy" thus describes an interaction between racial and gender systems of oppression, and the effective positioning of people of different gender, race, culture and class in a hierarchy "seen to be indicative of political worth or value" (13).

12 Schloesser's notion of "racial patriarchy" can also be seen to be at play within aspects of the contemporary feminist movement, and within the actions and discourses of both men and women living in Western societies today. In regards to the former, Moreton-Robinson (amongst other non-white feminists) have argued that feminist advances have been based on knowledge about oppressive factors in the lives of white middle-class women, and that these have been projected as the universal norm of challenges faced by all women. This focus solely on gender has failed entirely to consider racial or other oppressive factors that affect the lives of non-white, non-middle-class women, and to a large extent limits the benefits incurred from the feminist movement to white, middle-class women. Moreton-Robinson discusses this in relation to the sexual dichotomy between white and Indigenous Australian women, which has resulted in the two groups of women struggling for different forms of sexual agency. While many white women, for example, continue fighting for sexual freedom outside of marriage without being stigmatised as "whores," Indigenous women continue to struggle with the traditional stereotype of the sexually promiscuous black woman, which automatically leaves them open to unwanted sexual attention to which they have no right to refuse.

13 Examples such as these clearly demonstrate how ineffectual a single feminist movement, based primarily on knowledge about white middle-class women's lives, is in addressing the inequalities faced by women in differing subject positions, as crosscut by race, class and sexuality. The invisibility of whiteness as a racial category, and the imagined homogeneity of white women as representing the category "woman" results in a norm to which the salient differences of marginalised racial groups are measured against (Frankenberg). By viewing white middle-class women as the "universal woman," culturally or racially marginalised women are simultaneously silenced and marked as the "other". Similarly, "other" ethnic groups are frequently treated as homogenous and come to be represented by men, rather than being viewed as cross-cut by gender and class (Moreton-Robinson). The intersectional relationship between race, class and gender is evident in various discursive justifications, such as the way in which the oppressed positioning of women (in relation to men) and of non-white ethnic groups is frequently "naturalised" by their class and
economic position, whereby discourses around biological difference (such as the female role of child-bearer and mother) and of cultural difference (such as stereotypes of the "idle" black worker) are used to naturalise these class differences (Anthias & Yuval-Davis). On the other hand, Blauner suggests that as prejudicial class attitudes are generally more acceptable, racist attitudes are sometimes disguised as class-based criticisms. This is particularly damaging as non-white individuals are disproportionately clustered within the lower classes. (Fenton) The use of "tokenism," whereby successful non-white individuals who have "made it" are pointed to as examples of societal equality and opportunity, is similarly used as justification of race and/or class oppression (Russell).

These interacting identity positions of oppression and/or privilege are not merely additive, but work together to create particular subject locations within different cultural settings, which in Western societies ultimately appear to privilege "whiteness". (Dugger; Riggs) It is therefore important to examine how multiple concurrent discourses position women in a range of ways in a relation to particular social norms. Whilst it is indeed important to continually interrogate how gender norms oppress women in Western societies, it is also important to examine differences amongst women, and how women themselves use these differences to their own advantage or to legitimate their social position. In particular, the following analysis places a central focus on the way in which "white" patriarchal norms are enforced through intersecting raced and gendered discourses in the Big Brother house.

"Girls being girls" in Celebrity Big Brother

The Big Brother phenomenon, which first originated in 1999 in the Netherlands, is part of a plethora of "reality" shows sweeping televised networks in recent years. Despite the potential issues associated with deconstructing human behaviour in such artificial environments, shows such as Big Brother provide considerable opportunities for the critical study of social interaction and the role of language and discourse in constructing particular identities, which are frequently implicated in inequitable power relations.

The following analysis is based on several extracts drawn and transcribed from the 2007 Celebrity Big Brother series in the United Kingdom, with a focus on the strained relationship between Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty, and previous British Big Brother contestant Jade Goody, and two other young British women, Jo O'Meara and Danielle Lloyd. Particular focus is given to the interaction between gendered and racial discourses in the construction of specific identities. Conversations in which certain identities, actions and events were justified, explained and blamed by both the immediate protagonists and other
housemates were examined with particular attention paid to the linguistic and discursive devices which were actively used to position people.

17 An ongoing theme that occurred throughout the series was the attribution of the girls' behaviour to their gender. Throughout the series, the bullying to which Shetty was subjected by the three British women was frequently denied, explained, justified and rationalised, both by the protagonists and their fellow housemates, as simply the behaviours of "girls being girls," suggesting that such behaviours are solely the result of their gender, rather than also their location as British women. This is particularly evident in a discussion that took place between two of the men in the house, Ian Watkins and Jermaine Jackson, constructing the previous night's disputes which occurred between the girls as being "typical female behaviour" stemming from supposedly female attributes, such as envy. Firstly, however, the two men build up a version of events which successfully exonERATES the British girls from any act of intentional racism.

Jackson: When Jade [Goody] was going off when Shilpa [Shetty] — I was looking at Danielle [Lloyd] and Jo [O'Meara]. . . they were laughing.
Watkins: And that's what upsets me.
Jackson: They were laughing. They're being controlled by Jade, and then. . . and it's like — it's ignorance. . . that's all it is, it's ignorance.
Jackson: And I'm just speaking to both sides, just — just to be neutral. But I'm, I'm not gonna let, just things be unfair. Jade is Jade.
Watkins: Jade has her set of beliefs and she's acting upon them.
Jackson: Yeah right. Exactly.
Watkins: So in Jade's mind she's right, you know, and you can't change that. I've never witnessed anything like this before. Anything. Apart from in school.

While Jackson and Watkins obviously do not condone the behaviour they witnessed between the girls ("And that's what upsets me" — Watkins), it is nonetheless implied that rather than being purposeful, the bullying experienced by Shetty is due to inherent and unchangeable factors within the three British girls. This both works to deny individual accountability, and also acts to deny any role that the wider British or even Western social context plays in the construction of people's view and actions towards individuals from non-Western cultures. The behaviour of Lloyd and O'Meara is constructed as not entirely their own, but as stemming from their "ignorance" and tendency to follow group mentality. Such constructions of "ignorance" effectively exonerate the girls from acts of what could be called racial bullying, and instead positions their behaviour as the unintended consequences of "girls being girls."

18 Goody's behaviour is similarly constructed as not intentionally violent towards Shetty, with justifications such as "Jade is Jade" and she "has her set of beliefs and she's acting on them." While her treatment of Shetty is acknowledged to be "unfair," Watkins and Jackson
partially justify her actions by implying that Goody has no control over her beliefs and behaviour, which are presented as resulting from who she is, rather than a conscious choice. Goody's behaviour is furthermore constructed as unique to her as an individual, rather than having any link to the wider social environment, which is evident when Watkins says "I've never witnessed anything like this before." According to them, these kinds of beliefs and behaviours are somehow intrinsic to the person, rather than the society they live in, a common rhetoric identified by Van Dijk which works to deny the existence of underlying racism.

19 Watkins and Jackson thus establish that this particular incident is not indicative of wider British behaviour, but rather resides within the main protagonists, though not as a product of their intentional actions. They continue on to suggest that this kind of behaviour actually implicates the female gender in general. Interestingly, while it is suggested that the treatment of Shetty is "unfair," it is simultaneously implied that Shetty has played an active role in all unfolding events, by referring to her as being a "side" in the dispute. These events are regarded as being driven by generalised female (emotion-driven) behaviours such as jealousy and envy. This of course evokes discourses about female "hormones" which are constructed as the antithesis of adult rationality.

Watkins: Hormones are everywhere.

Jackson: Yeah. This place could have been full of guys and we all would have gotten along.

According to Watkins, "hormones are everywhere," a statement which suggests that rather than acting on conscious intent, the main protagonists are largely driven and controlled by the irrational (female) emotions of jealousy and envy. Furthermore, in Watkins' talk hormones are constructed as solely the domain of women ("this place could have been full of guys and we all would have gotten along" – Watkins), thus ignoring men's own (potentially hormonally-driven) behaviours, as were witnessed by many in the house when particular (heterosexually-identified) male housemates acted in lustful and indeed inappropriate ways towards female housemates.

20 By suggesting that the particular events or issues between the three British girls and Shetty would never have happened in a houseful of men, Watkins and Jackson effectively relegate the events as resulting solely from the women's gender, rather than also being culturally based. This raises the question as to whether Shetty would have been targeted by Goody, O'Meara and Lloyd had she been male, rather than a self-possessed female held in
relatively high esteem within her own country, again drawing attention to the various ways in which race, class and gender are uniquely crosscut and articulated by each other. (Anderson & Collins; Burman) While intersecting discourses of race and gender appear at play within the interactions between the women, these are rendered invisible through a normative discourse of "girls being girls" within the house.

21 In stark comparison, Watkins fails to draw on gender discourses when comparing the conflict between the girls in the house, to his own experiences of bullying at school.

Watkins [Ian]: I'm talking about, you know the things Danielle [Lloyd] has said, cos' she said some really nasty thing to Shilpa [Shetty], and I just think that she's being influenced by Jade [Goody] a little bit. Every time I try and say something to stay neutral, um, ah, they just bite my head off and start slagging Shilpa off and I just won't be part of it any more — so the best thing to do is extract myself from the situation. I feel really kind of isolated really. It's almost like bullying — you know I was bullied at school. And that's what it feels like. Really really unfair.

Whilst reference is made to group mentality in order justify particular behaviours ("I just think she's being influenced by Jade a little bit" — Watkins), the behaviour is this time constructed as "almost like bullying." In likening the events in the house to his own experiences of bullying, Watkins (a white gay man) in his own case does not construct the behaviour as gender-driven, implicitly suggesting that female disputes are more likely to be attributed to gender characteristics, whereas male disputes are more likely to be attributed to external influences, or "real" unfairness, such as bullying.

22 Discussions between two of the British girls regarding their treatment of Shetty also draw on a discourse of gender and constructions of group mentality. When defending their actions and their views of Shetty, Lloyd and O'Meara extend this argument to include Shetty's different culture and background as provocative, in order to justify their actions.

Lloyd: Shilpa's [Shetty] not a bad person. She means well. But she is very controlling. Very controlling. I just don't like getting told what to do. Ever. That just really pisses me off. But she does mean well.

O'Meara: Yeah she does. It's just completely different cultures and different ways of living and mannerisms. I mean we're eleven strangers thrown in a really close house. It's a good size but it's small for the amount of people — you can't get away ever. . .

In their discussion, Lloyd and O'Meara work up two concurrent versions of Shetty; firstly, as a well-meaning person, and secondly as a controlling and non-genuine person. Lloyd's construction of Shetty as someone who "means well" effectively works to portray Lloyd as intuitive and understanding of Shetty's character, and also works to deny any malevolent intent in her words to follow. Her statement that Shetty is "controlling" is softened by preceding and subsequent assurances that Shetty "does mean well," which work to lend
credence to the statement that Shetty, indeed, must be controlling and dominating. Constructions of Shetty as "controlling" further lend justification to the dislike of Shetty displayed by the three girls, as though it is merely reactionary — as Lloyd states: no-one likes "getting told what to do." While Lloyd appears to be referring primarily to Shetty's personality, O'Meara suggests that Shetty's "different cultures and different ways of living and mannerisms" are the underlying cause of her domineering behaviour. Thus, while O'Meara is talking about the "different cultures and different ways of living [. . .] [of] eleven strangers," begins her sentence with explicit reference to Shetty ("Yeah she does") and hence constructs this difference as referenced from Shetty – Shetty is the point from which difference is measured.

The second reason put forward for the exclusion of Shetty, and one that references the construction of "girls being girls," evokes the idea that Lloyd, O'Meara and Goody all "live in the same sort of area, go to the same sort of place" and "just get on."

Lloyd: It's like a big massive celebrity from here going over to India and none of them knowing who she is or whatever. But then again I do think, I don't know sometimes whether Shilpa is being herself or not, but I don't think we'll ever find out. It's just hard. And obviously me, you and Jade are young girls and we have the same sort —

O'Meara: Yeah, we all live in the same sort of area, go to the same sort of place.

Lloyd: That's why we just get on. We're not doing it to leave her out or be spiteful or be fuckin' bitches or whatever.

Implied here is that Shetty is unable to "just get on" with them, and thus that she is not one of the "young girls." The justification for this is that she doesn't live in a similar area or go to similar places. While it is not stated explicitly at this point in the extract, the implication is, following on from the earlier construction of Shetty as the point from which difference is measured, that "the same sort of area/places" are in fact British areas and places, thus suggesting that it is Shetty's cultural differences that make it impossible for all of the girls to "just get on." Thus in this extract the three British girls "just get on" by being girls from the same area whilst Shetty (being a "girl" from another "area") is not included in this construction of girls "just getting on."

Once again, a discourse of gender is drawn upon to justify the three British girls' behaviour and views. Their behaviour is justified as not purposeful, but merely resulting from how well they get on as three "young girls" who have similar backgrounds. They are not trying to "leave [Shetty] out or be spiteful or fuckin' bitches," but rather suggest that it is just too difficult to bridge the cultural and geographical gap between themselves and Shetty. This, too, is justified with the assertion that Shetty is possibly not genuine, which would thus make it very difficult (and ultimately unnecessary) to connect with her. Such rhetoric is reminiscent
of Augustinos and Every's assertion that certain events or attitudes are commonly justified as being reflective of the "real" world or an external "truth," whilst downplaying the role that their own individual subjectivity plays in such constructions. Their (mis)treatment of Shetty is thus constructed as unintentional, and also as unavoidable, due to Shetty's own "controlling" and non-genuine personality.

25 In a discussion between Shetty and the three British girls regarding Shetty's use of facial bleaching cream, we are able to see constructions of the "other" clearly emerging in the construction of Shetty's gendered identity by the three British girls.

Lloyd: Bleaching your facial hair?
Goody: Yeah she got – she shaves.
O'Mears: Piss off
Lloyd: She does. She shaves her face.
O'Mears: What, her whole face?
Goody: Yeah she, they — she shaves her face.
O'Mears: What has she got a face like a man?
Goody: Like wolf-boy probably [all laugh]

What is most apparent here is the way in which Shetty is not only constructed as physically different to the three British girls, but also as somehow less feminine on the basis of this physical difference. The incredulity demonstrated by O'Meara when finding out that Shetty bleaches her facial hair ("Piss off"; "What has she got a face like a man?") creates the impression that Shetty's facial hair is something abnormal, and deviating from the normal physical bounds defining natural femininity. While on the one hand this supposedly strange and unfeminine difference to their own is constructed as something only afflicting Shetty as an individual, it becomes clear by default that Shetty is being considered as part of a group when Goody says "Yeah she, they — she shaves her face." Clearly, Shetty is being included in the category "they," which assumedly refers to all Indian women, thus extending the negative connotations associated with facial hair to Indian women more generally, as compared to British women who are implicitly constructed as not having facial hair.

26 It is interesting to note the particular words used by the British women, which draw on discourses typically used to describe male activities and physical features.

Goody: She was hairy and they bleached it — I mean and they shaved it.
Shetty: No they lasered it.
Goody: Shaved it and then lasered it.
Shetty: And they shaved it before they lasered it, so which means that –
O'Mears: It grows back.
Shetty: It grows back, and I haven't had time to get it lasered. . .
Lloyd: Do you get stubble?
Shetty: No. I do have baby hair on my face which looks like. . . bear hair now.
O'Mears: You're, you're bleaching your whole face off?
Shetty: When you have side burns and...you can't not bleach —
O'Meara: That's like a man.
Lloyd: [laughing]
O'Meara: [louder] That's like a man.
Lloyd: I haven't got any bleach – I mean I haven't got any hairs.
Shetty: Thanks for rubbing it in. [Lloyd laughing]
O'Meara: You better rub it in. But I just don't get why you're bleaching your nose?
Shetty: Just, just to make it all look even.

O'Meara is extremely forthright when she repeatedly states "that's like a man" (in response to Shetty shaving her face). While the words here are direct in describing Shetty as "like a man," the repetition of this statement with escalating emphasis shows the direct use of power in ascribing a certain identity to Shetty. More subtle was the use of particular words in constructing Shetty as less feminine, such as the emphasis placed on the words "shave," "hairy" and "stubble" (more often associated with men's, rather than women's, faces), and furthermore, Goody's previous description of Shetty as "wolf-boy." Here Goody again directly constructs Shetty as having masculine attributes rather than feminine. The laughter of the three British women in response to this statement further suggests that Shetty's femininity is laughable, and that she can never aspire to being female in the same way that they can. In short she is constructed as different, in regard to her gender, and her physical features, which are largely linked to her cultural heritage that is constructed as inherently different to that of the British women.

27 The curiosity demonstrated by both O'Meara and Lloyd regarding Shetty's facial hair, and their insult to her femininity, is disguised by their apparently genuine surprise, and the innocence (whether feigned or real) in some of the questions directed towards Shetty. On the other hand, Goody almost takes on the role of authoritative narrator, explaining to O'Meara and Lloyd the situation regarding Shetty's facial hair, assuming an air of authority that enhances her power to construct Shetty's gender identity. Shetty is continuously constructed as abnormally different throughout the extract, both in terms of her existing facial hair, and in terms of the non-existent facial fair of the three British women ("I haven't got any hairs" – Lloyd). The negative connotations of having facial hair are apparent in the way in which O'Meara says, "you better rub it in," with implied negative implications of having visible facial hair for a female. Furthermore, having facial hair is constructed as something to be ashamed of, and something which Shetty should attempt to deal with "discreetly."

Goody: I can't believe she does her makeup in the toilet all discreet but walks out with that on her face.
O'Meara: Yeah [Imitating Indian Accent] "And I've got a big hairy face. And I must bleach the hairs off my face".
The final statement by O'Meara is clearly racist, imitating Shetty's Indian accent with ridicule towards Shetty's physical features, clearly linking them to her Indian heritage. Gender and racial categories are both drawn upon here, and as was the case with the white women examined in Schloesser's text, the white woman is constructed as the representation of true femininity, compared to the dark-skinned and hairy Indian woman, who is somehow constructed as less female, and thus potentially somehow less human. The existence of historically contingent ideologies such as the "fair sex" – a term defining only white or "fair" women as real women (Hoagland; Schloesser), are evidently present in modern-day discourses.

**Conclusion**

28 The analysis provided in this paper calls to attention the complex ways in which numerous facets of identity are inescapably enmeshed together in everyday discourses and ideologies. Such an observation, it must be said, necessitates an ongoing critical analysis of the interlinked structural and systemic ideologies which serve to position, and justify positioning, individuals on the basis of "differentiations" such as race, class, gender, sexuality and ability. The examples drawn from *Celebrity Big Brother* demonstrate the ways in which the accrual of particular attributes associated with whiteness – in this instance Britishness, cultural habits, and certain constructions of femininity – were used to validate positions of privilege (and associated positions of oppression) within the *Big Brother* house. Of particular interest were the varying interpretations and explanations of events offered by both the protagonists and other housemates, which consistently drew on a number of historically contingent discourses about white women, and their relationship with the racial "other."

29 This analysis specifically highlights the complex interaction between race and gender discourses, and resulting positions of privilege or oppression associated with the accumulation (or lack thereof) of "cultural capital" (Hage). The construction of the tense relationship between Shetty and the British "trio" (Goody, O'Meara & Lloyd) as being due to uniquely female styles of interaction, and female attributes, is just one such way in which racist discourses can seemingly subtly emerge through other identity constructions, which could also include class, sexuality or ability. Whilst many variations on this theme were articulated by the housemates (with particular differences noted between male and female accounting of events), they worked to reduce the "racist" intent of the protagonists, and to reduce differences between protagonists to gender effects, effectively minimising cultural or
racialised evocations of difference. Such constructions of "girls being girls" or of a "gendered" form of bullying imply that so-called "racist" actions are accidental and unintentional, reinforcing dominant images of racism as something only present in working-class males rather than as a phenomenon not restricted to a given class or gender, and thus also manifest in mixed-class female-to-female discourses (Ware). Strongly reminiscent of Schloesser's depiction of racial and patriarchal hierarchies was the manner in which the men in the house presumed authority in defining female identities and actions within the house, and in turn, the power that the white women in the house wielded in the construction of Shetty's identity as being outside the bounds of normative (white) femininity.

30 In the Big Brother house Shetty is subjected to outright ridicule of (racialised) physical attributes (i.e. facial hair), and of cultural habits and ideas (essentially constructed as inferior to "white" cultural habits). The corresponding discourses constructed by the three British women to justify their dislike of Shetty were based on fatal dissimilarities in terms of common background and culture, and also on Shetty's supposedly inherent unlikable personality (constructed as both an individual, cultural and class fallibility). Clearly, it becomes a complicated matter to extract and untangle class, gender or racial discourses from such interactions. It is not until we take a closer look that it becomes evident that Shetty's skin colour (i.e., one that is not identified as "white"), and her lack of conformity to "white" cultural values (as seen by Goody, O'Meara & Lloyd) came to be negatively constructed through a myriad of classed, gendered and cultural/national discourses. These factors demonstrably found articulation through each other, in a manner that signifies the complexity of informing ideological structures and systems, and which draws attention to the relative positions of privilege and oppression which they inform and support.

31 Such discursive constructions ("girls being girls") play an instrumental role in the continual maintenance and justification of white race privilege; conferring benefits to those who adhere to or can explain events in a manner consistent with white cultural norms (Frankenberg). Shetty was demonstrably on the outside of these norms from the onset, and was unable or unwilling to engage with the changing and arbitrary "rules" defining inclusion. Rather than acknowledging the subjective nature of white culture within the house, Shetty instead became positioned as the site of "difference," in comparison with the "normal" (white) ways of behaving that were deemed acceptable within the house. Clearly, white culture here was operating as an "unmarked and unnamed" (Frankenberg 1) category, against which Shetty's salient gendered and classed cultural differences were measured. Despite protestations of tolerance and impartiality, "whiteness" was constructed by the British girls as
something desirable and somehow "naturally" better. As discussed by Van Dijk, and Anthias and Yuval-Davis, concurrent discursive constructions such as these work to deny the existence of racism, and thus suggest that any privilege granted to white people is therefore the result of "natural" superiority. In the case of the Big Brother house, this "natural" superiority literally referred to having white skin, along with conforming to various "white" cultural norms.

32 Following on from these findings, if we examine a statement made by Goody in her exit interview ("I know I said those things and they were nasty but I'm not a racist [. . .]. I don't judge people by the colour of their skin, [or] where they come from"), it could be suggested that people rarely recognise the ways in which racially discriminative discourses are entwined with their constructions of class, gender, culture and nationality when speaking about the "other." Even more difficult to recognise is the unearned ability to exercise privilege based on "cultural capital." As has been suggested by numerous other researchers, the only way that racial oppression can truly be overcome is for "white" or otherwise privileged people to increasingly recognise and acknowledge their own privileged status, as opposed to focusing only on the oppressed status of the "other". (McIntosh; Moreton-Robinson; Riggs & Choi)

33 While the wider implications of the denial of racism in the UK and in Western multicultural societies are beyond the scope of this paper, questions about the role that intersecting classed, raced and gendered identities play in the practice and maintenance of racist ideologies and institutions have undoubtedly been raised for further ongoing scrutiny. Most particularly, the analysis provided here demonstrates the way in which supposedly "past" historically racist and interlinked constructions of race, class and gender continue to find expression in a post-modern world, and continue to manifest in discriminatory and self-serving "white" perspectives and practices. It therefore seems that in order to truly make sense of particular experiences and subject locations, it is necessary to examine these as intersecting factors, working to produce unique subject positions within hierarchies of privilege and oppression.
Works Cited


By Saheed Aderinto, University of Texas at Austin

1 The presence or absence of homosexuality in Africa is certainly one of the most hotly contested debates in academic and political circles in recent years. This debate was orchestrated partly because of the desire of African homosexuals to come out of the closet and secure legal and institutional recognition for their sexual orientation, which is considered "unnatural," "abnormal" and "unAfrican" by mainstream heterosexual Africa. At the center of this seemingly intractable contestation is a well-articulated position that same-sex affairs are not only alien to the continent but were introduced by foreigners, notably Westerners, during colonial rule. Some African leaders like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda launched formidable repressive attacks aimed at "cutting the head of the roaring monster." The release of important studies like Murray and Roscoe's *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands*, Marc Epprecht's *Hungochani* and Neville Hoad's *African Intimacies*, among others, signals a new turning point in academic engagement with sexuality discourses. These authors denounced the absence of non-normative sexuality in Africa by looking at institutionalized forms of same-sex affairs among some select African ethnic groups.

2 Epprecht's new book, *Heterosexual Africa*, while conforming to the theoretical orientation of the above-mentioned works, charts a new direction in the discourse of sexuality in Africa. Instead of focusing on specific regions of the continent, Epprecht takes a *longue durée* approach to the historical evolution of contemporary academic discourses and popular ideas, which summarily see same-sex affairs as "unAfrican." The book's data come from specialized disciplines such as history, psychology, sociology, anthropology, as well as film, literature and popular culture studies. The contribution of this book to sexuality studies and Africanist scholarship definitely goes beyond the richness and diversity of sources and methodology. The origin of the idea of Africa's heteronormativity or exclusive heterosexuality devoid of the "pestilence" of homosexuality as well as its transformations from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century is presented in a captivating manner.

3 By looking at the evolution and transformation of the idea of the "unafrikaness" of homosexuality and Africa's exclusive heterosexuality over a period of over 500 years, Epprecht is able to demonstrate how significant developments such as colonial rule, political and cultural nationalism during and after the demise of colonial rule, and the debate over the
causation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic from the mid 1980s have structured scholarly and popular endorsement of Africa's heteronormativity and the idea of a distinct African sexuality which is not only permissive but also promiscuous. Epprecht opines that some misguided scholars of HIV/AIDS and other commentators not only see Africa as essentially heterosexual, but also believe that the pandemic is attributable to sexual permissiveness and promiscuity. What is more, by historicizing the entrenchment of Africa's exclusive heterosexuality, Epprecht clearly exposes this blind spot of African history, thus showing that writings and debates about the absence or presence of homosexuality predate our contemporary age – thereby contradicting the assumption that the contestation over homosexuality is a recent development.

4 According to Epprecht, European travelers and armchair commentators were the first to document their observations about African sexuality. They were convinced that Africa was immune to the satanic and barbaric influence of sodomy. Some of them, like Edward Gibbon, provided the intellectual justification that points to Africa's closeness to nature. In Western conviction and imagination, the closer a group or race was to nature, the more natural and the less prone they were to sexual aberration and anomalies like homosexuality, bisexuality and other shades of sexual orientation that depart from the "normal" and "natural."

5 The idea of "primitive" African sexuality free of the sexual pestilence of homosexuality did not end with the establishment of colonialism. Indeed, colonialism facilitated the entrenchment of a new class of writers and commentators who had the resources and time to study Africa and its "barbaric" and "uncivilized" cultures and peoples. As an intellectual arm of imperialism, anthropology, according to Epprecht, not only endorsed the observations of its homophobic precursors but also provided new coherent and systematic findings pointing to an African exclusive heterosexuality. Within this ideologically motivated endeavour, evidence pointing to same-sex affairs was either discussed ephemerally or outright dismissed. In Epprecht's words, "By conjuring idealized or exoticized Natives, Primitives, and other Others, they [anthropologists] helped to create an understanding of 'normal' and 'modern' by way of contrast and edification. In the process they created a body of purportedly empirical or scientific data that in retrospect we can see as deeply flawed and morally normative" (34).

6 Africanist scholars and nationalists as well as contemporary academics consider colonialism as a dark period of African history for it led to enormous human and material exploitation. However, as Epprecht opines, they agree with these early anthropologists that same-sex relations are "unAfrican." Thus, according to Epprecht, Africanist scholarship
inherited some of the age-old biases of the Western tradition of homophobia. Epprecht mentions the works of prominent nationalist writers such as Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, who clearly demonstrates the reluctance of nationalists to accept the presence of homosexuality in Africa. Even when they mentioned the presence of homosexuality, they were quick to adduce it to the influence to Western cultural infiltration. On why Africanist scholars seem to denounce same-sex affairs, Epprecht's opines, "Indeed, in colonial and Cold World contexts, where homophobia was almost a civic duty and where Africans commonly encountered patronizing attitudes from whites, African scholars may have feared that to produce evidence on the topic, or even to show curiosity about it, might be taken as a reproof of African dignity" (131). Thus, Africanist scholars and writers, especially those in the literary field, depict the representation of same-sex affairs but do not endorse them.

7 The Yoruba proverb "A kii dara ka ma ku si ibi kan" (literally, "No matter how excellent one is, there is always a dose of imperfection" or "all good things have limitations") best explains the strength and weakness of this work. The limitation of this book is explicable in terms of its orientation as a synthesis. On several occasions, evidence is only cursorily presented in buttressing points and arguments. This approach, while conforming to the standard of a highly specialized academic field of history of sexuality and sexuality studies, may not satisfy the curiosity of readers who are not familiar with the complex debates and directions in the field.

Works Cited

By Rosemary Onyango, Indiana State University

1 The increasing scholarly attention on the manifestation of tricksters in postmodern fictive narratives indicates the figure's significance as a motif and stylistic novelty. Among those who have contributed valuable insights into this topic are Jeanne Rosier Smith and Jeanne Campbell Reesman. Tannen's book supplements this growing body of literature in its creative and passionate accommodation of interdisciplinary perspectives. Although Hyde's article "Where are the Women Tricksters?", included in Reesman's volume, indicates that female tricksters are less prevalent in contemporary times, Tannen proclaims: "A female Trickster is among us. She stands visible at the crossroads of feminism, humor, depth, psychology and postmodernism, ready for us to unpack her bag of multiple meanings" (3).

2 Grounded in post-Jungian and postmodern psychological perspectives, Tannen traces the progression of the female Trickster in mythology, social institutions, literature and film revealing how the feminine identity has been shaped, redefined and liberated from various limitations. She views the use of a mature sense of humor as central to exposing the Trickster's wit, allowing her to reclaim her life. Inspired by the Nancy Drew Mystery Series of her youth and contemporary American works of fiction Tannen's thesis reflects her passion for this topic:

> My thesis throughout this book has been that what has been manifested in the female body in the last half of the twentieth century, while certainly standing on the shoulders of all those witty women and men who have come before them, is a new variant of Feminine energy manifesting through humor which can be embodied in many forms: from heterosexual woman or man, a cross-dresser, a transvestite, a homosexual, and other gender forms not yet known or named. (240)

3 Divided into four parts, the book has fourteen chapters, detailed endnotes, a useful index and lengthy bibliography. Part I lays the groundwork for the study. Following a brief introduction and definitions in chapter 1, chapter 2 introduces the focal fictional female Tricksters: Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski, a lawyer and investigator; Sara Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, a feminist investigator concerned with issues of wealth, power and social justice; Barbara Neely's Blanche White, an African American worker that employs her Trickster energy to confront race, gender and class; and Dana Stabenow's Kate Shugak, an attractive Native American with a sensitive and critical mind that discusses prejudicial attitudes within
Chapter 3 provides theoretical frameworks for analyzing these and other female detectives.

Part II, "Calling upon the Ancestors," is a compelling exploration of the repression of women's imagination in institutionalized patriarchy detailing the social-economic, legal and political factors that influenced the evolution of women's autonomy in their role as wives, writers and professionals. Chapter 6, "Law and the imagination" exposes how the courts sanctioned gender bias before the 1970s, restricting women's right to vote, own property and become lawyers. Tannen attributes legal transformations to the growing consciousness of a male judge who witnessed the impact of gender bias on women in his courtroom in the 1980s and to women's own activism. Regarding the latter she states:

As women streamed into the legal profession in the 1970s and 1980s, they were the ones who could not avert their eyes from the legal enclosure women found themselves in and thus led in pushing through the cases which challenged sex-based discrimination. (91)

Additionally, Tannen's examination of various views about Trickster myths such as Native American's Winnebago and North West coast of America's Raven, is linked to and strengthens her treatment of women's humor in Parts III, "Honoring the Traditions" and IV, "Re/storation." According to Tannen, creative feminine identity arises from the women's role as bridge builders "between previously uncrossable boundaries and borders" (204). Another avenue for exploring humor is Sex in the City, which, in Tannen's view, exemplifies Trickster's re-emergence in popular media. Tannen stresses that besides their interaction with men, the focal characters bond with each other and "work their shape-shifting magic on every possible permutation of sexual adventure previously off-limits for women to "voice" in mainstream culture" (226). Exploring themes as varied as relationships, occupations and social justice, Tannen demonstrates how they weave words with humor to expose issues that society views as subversive.

The book's main contributions include thorough treatment of interdisciplinary perspectives, reviews of various sources that span several decades and original insights. Tannen infuses her personal experience in her discussion of waves of feminism and adopts a feminist approach to textual materials which "would require at the very least an explicit demonstration of sensitivities to the differences that affect the writer, the reader, and the cultures they are embedded within, including an analysis of the impacts of these contexts upon the writing" (31). The book exposes multiple evolutions from earlier held views in the context of socialization and psychological models, feminism, and the Jungian and post-Jungian perspectives in juxtaposition to trends in law and imagination, humor and the
emergence of the female Trickster in women's writing. Tannen's observation that early feminist modernism and postmodernist theoretical assumptions share some limitations including lack of sensitivity to diversity indicates that she does not hesitate to expose their weaknesses.

7 In discussing how socialization patterns might have enabled and restricted men and women with the potential to becoming great writers, Tannen draws from sources ranging from the early works of Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf, to new energy in women's writings produced between the nineteenth century and 1970s. Regarding white women writers she notes, "Any women writing during this time frame had to be extremely privileged in relation to material and ideological determinants such as money, education, status, genre and conduct to have her imaginal realms even come near pen and paper" (Tannen 99). Although the changing of married women's family names to that of the husbands' limited their property rights; Tannen observes that besides collaborating with men, pioneer women writers "took male names or showcased their married titles in order to get published...they worked within women's traditional statuses and role expectations to manifest their Trickster energies" (101).

8 Recognizing the decade of the 1980s a defining era, Tannen affirms that the renaissance of the female Trickster was not accidental. She builds a strong case about narratives of gender socialization, the legal system and male-dominated literary canons that impacted the personal and cultural survival of generations of women. The Trickster energy discovered in mythology, mystery novels, poetry and excerpts from film support how they navigated barriers in the process of salvaging their autonomy. The book highlights the recurrent motif, "refusing to be victim" and the theme of "the mask that reveals" as the hallmarks of the postmodern female Trickster who has mastered the art of deploying mature humor, authority, agency and autonomy to overcome obstacles. However, Tannen cautiously celebrates the prevalence of the Trickster energy in women's writing and society, stating: "Even though western women have legal identity along with greater freedom of physical and psychological movement, life is still quite segregated, albeit in a more subtle fashion" (164).

9 A few sections suffer from lack of clarity and specificity. Chapter 9 discusses humor, a central component of the Trickster energy. In some instances, such as the treatment of the four stages of development Piaget's views and the author's appear indistinct. Also, the section on clowns although linked to the humor in female sleuths, lacks specific supporting evidence. Regarding the use of questions, a few seem to interrupt the flow of ideas. The summary section of "Imagination and metaphor," contains two questions that beg for a comment instead, there is a quotation from Thelma Shinn that though informative, renders a relatively
fractured ending compared to other chapters that summarize the salient ideas. Similarly, in the section titled "Trickster as taboo transgressor," Tannen introduces several questions stating they would be addressed in Chapters 9 and 10. While the latter attempts to tackle some of them, both chapters pose additional questions.

Overall, the book is a valuable scholarly contribution that is well researched and inspiring. It presents a number of thought-provoking ideas that will be of considerable interest to readers and researchers in multicultural literature and gender studies.

Works Cited


List of Contributors

Jennifer Esposito is an Assistant Professor in the department of Educational Policy Studies at Georgia State University. Her research interests include representations of race, gender, and sexuality in popular culture texts and race, class, gender identity negotiation in urban education.

Bettina Love is an Instructor in the department of Educational Policy Studies at Georgia State University. Her research interests include Hip Hop, urban education, and the representation of race, gender, and sexuality in popular culture texts.

Norbert Finzsch teaches North-American History at the University of Cologne. He received his education in Cologne, Bordeaux and Berkeley. After a lengthy stint in Hamburg from 1992 to 2000, he came back to his alma mater in 2001. Among his main areas of interest and research are gender history, the history of sexuality and theories and methods of historiography. A previous publication of his, "Discourses of Genocide in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century America and Australia", can be found in gender forum 10 (2005).

Melissa Wright is currently completing her Honours degree in Psychology at the University of Adelaide. Her research interests lie in the area of Critical or Discursive Psychology, in particular critical race and whiteness studies.