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# ***Individualism, Group Recognition and the Social Construction of Race on Reality TV***

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## **Abstract**

*This paper is about the reality TV show 'Black.White' and the dialogue of some of its characters, viewers and producers. The central premise is that there are structural inequalities inherent in US society and that race, while being a social construction, contributes to these inequalities through material affects and effects, which we can trace and disclose through an analysis of discourse, text<sup>1</sup> and voice connected to the show. Using a framework suggested by James Paul Gee (2005) and other academics, in particular Rudolf Gaudio and Steve Bialostok (2005), my analysis of various texts connected with the show (1) unpacks evidence of 'language in use', and how it disguises structural privilege and inequalities; (2) 'discloses the related D/discourses' used to reinforce and construct such meaning; and (3) 'retrieves the political work', or rather the social goods – power, status, valued knowledge – being thought about, argued over and distributed in society, 'as instantiated within text-making'.*

**Keywords:** Race, Reality TV, USA, Difference-making, Discourse Analysis

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 What is Reality TV?**

For those that think reality television<sup>2</sup> is a new phenomena we should remember it began in 1948 with *Candid Camera* and Allen Funt, who for the first time proclaimed to an audience, 'you are the star'. This watershed moment in TV history had impacts across many fields. For example 'psychologists were intrigued with the concept of putting ordinary people into unusual circumstances to see how they behaved; [and] consequently, many created their own reality experiments on film as academic adaptations of *Candid Camera*' (Simon 2005: 181).

Today reality TV can be considered as a Williamsesque flow<sup>3</sup> alongside the celebrity worlds<sup>4</sup> and fictional culture of Hollywood. A big difference however concerns the way new reality stars are considered more believable and trustworthy than film stars and TV actors, as if they were not a part of a constructed project designed for transmission and economic profit (Berenstein 2002: 42). In the context of *Black.White* this believability left

unchallenged concretises certain racial stereotypes and masks the deliberate production decisions behind their creation.<sup>5</sup>

Reality TV embodies many different genres, from adventure and soap opera to sport and docudrama. There are reality comedies like the *Osbournes* and *The Simple Life*. There is salacious reality like *Temptation Island* and *The Bachelorette*. All manifest a cross-fertilisation of genres, yet 'reality', this slippery term no social scientist is comfortable with, is still always portrayed as a legitimising social 'anchor'.

One reason for the genre's appeal could be that unlike philosophical, legal or other specialised texts, reality TV engages issues on an emotional and non-technical level and can be understood by a wide spectrum of the public in a way that provides easy access, for many different parties to debate the issues. Yet if this is the case the move from chefs to race it is not a simple one because reality TV, which used to elicit the superficial, now overtly deals with the contentious and problematic – a space needing thought and consideration – not necessarily qualities immediately associated with reality TV and the distracted viewing etiquette described by Terry Birchmore. 'The bogus, the derivative, and the flashy and gaudy now catch the attention of the mass, who sans sense, are captive to a superficiality of response based on degraded attentional abilities' (Birchmore cited in McKee 2005: 3). The worry becomes 'a trivialisation of race', as an accepted 'fact' that washes over the masses, instead of a problematising notion for all to engage.

For my purposes reality TV is best described as a fly on the wall experience whose manipulative tendencies are there to be seen, but not always noted. In a faint echo of Habermas' 'Public Sphere' I posit reality TV as a potential virtual space where 1) social classifications can be viewed and debated; and 2) where public opinion concerning neoliberal discourse is enacted and constructed; a conversation held in the following section and a theme I attempted to elicit from my informants who watched the show. A final connection and central thread running through my paper considers reality TV simply as Raymond Williams (1974) would, as a text 'contributing to the social construction of reality', i.e. a part of 'the material forces that help produce' and 'reproduce our world' (Spigel 1992: xiv).

The reality TV show *Black.White* was a six-part 'reality-drama' aired in spring 2006. It focused on two families who with the aid of modern make-up techniques switched 'races' and interacted with wider society. They lived in the same house and at the end of each day exchanged stories about their experiences. Not only were there dynamics between the characters and the 'outside world' but there were also revealing interplays between and within the various families.

The show aired on the FX Channel, owned by the Fox Network and hence was embedded, from production values to advertising to corporate ethos, within a right-wing political framework that should not be over looked. However for the purposes of this paper this is not something I explore, but rather leave out there to be either considered or overlooked by the reader.

In terms of running order the next section on reality TV as Public Sphere is followed by discourse analysis of a scene from the show featuring Mr Sparks the 'black' father wearing white make-up and working in a bar where racist

discourse was blatant, overt and self-evident. Next in an attempt to pull out the subtleties of how race discourse is instantiated in dialogue away from the contrived nature and production of the show I analyse an NPR interview with the 'white' father Mr Marcotulli who wore black make-up and whose explanatory systems (Linde 1983) and cultural models (Gaudio and Bialostok 2005) concerning individual responsibility prove enlightening and place racism in the soul of the individual, away from inherent societal structure or group relationship. This is followed by another radio interview, this time with the 'black' father where my analysis reveals how his language constructs and reinforces Herbert Blumer's group position theory of prejudice. The relationship between the utterances of these two men will later be analysed to demonstrate how both sides of the colour divide contribute to the construction and materiality of race(ism).

Next by focusing on the transcripts of two US viewers of the show we interrogate the viewer and what passes for authentic racial experience on *Black.White*. In an attempt to wed racism to a wider discourse of neoliberalism, televisual discourse and the dominant cultural order (Hall 1992: 98), i.e. how racism is learned through watching TV texts and their representation of 'reality', I then analyse an interview with the producer of the show. This is then followed by my conclusion and some final thoughts.

The FX Channel was very careful to frame *Black.White* as 'confronting racism'. My conclusions elucidate this is not what my discourse project revealed. Instead, what at face value appeared as a space for a debate about race actually reinforced racial identification and subsequently racism in subtle ways.

## 1.2 Reality TV as 'Public Sphere'

One thing the casual observer may note about reality TV culture and those who'd consider themselves as fans of the genre is the massive amount of dialogue the shows appear to create amongst viewers, on Internet message boards, in homes and in public conversation spaces like talk shows, radio phone-ins and newspapers concerning characters, storylines and subplots. This 'fact' has made TV programmes, and lately reality TV itself, a popular subfield of cultural studies called audience studies.<sup>6</sup>

These spaces of conversation constructed for the extensive debate concerning material connected with these shows leads me to consider Jürgen Habermas' 'public sphere' as a loose metaphor and hermeneutic for reality TV. For example, do viewers of reality TV check authority, and the power to name circulating in the flow of reality programming, like Habermas' 19th century citizens once critiqued State power and the official economy's production and circulation of discourses? It is certainly a point to consider. Not least to adjust comprehension of how reality TV representations are read, consumed and reproduced.

In academic writing the 'public sphere' is often used to denote a virtual space where communication about public life can take place and 'citizens of a country exchange ideas and discuss issues in order to reach agreement about matters of general interest' (McKee 2005: 4-5) in the process developing the autonomy of civil society. This idea, in everyday parlance, could be redefined

as ‘the media’ – a place where representations of the world are produced, encoded, presented as meaningful public discourse, and then decoded by the viewer (Hall 1993: 94) before being discussed and fed back into the social by those watching and reading what is presented to them. Both definitions are adaptations whose faithfulness to the original concept is tacit rather than rigorous.

Habermas’ original *Öffentlichkeit*, or ‘public sphere’ was a 19th century, democratic bourgeois realm of social life in which something approaching public opinion could be formed (McKee 2005: 8). It was an autonomous space between authority (conceptualised as State power) and civil society, where private individuals could publicly debate, critically engage and arrive at decisions about authority through rational dialogue, which Habermas himself defined in the following terms:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatised but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The medium of political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of their reason. (Habermas 1989: 27)

In early modern Europe it was media such as newspapers and forums such as coffeehouses and salons that provided spaces where the functions of the public sphere – competing voices coming together, presenting different positions, expressing their own private thoughts (ibid: 30) and publicly monitoring state authority – could take place.

Today I posit this notion of public sphere as existent but transformed greatly. Habermas’ sphere of communication grew, he argues, because the development of capitalism provided an intersection<sup>7</sup> between the new political bourgeois class, material resources and urbanisation to form a network of institutions within civil society like newspapers in which the new political force, and public opinion could come into existence. In contemporary times the intersection of mass communication technologies and practices including *Big Brother’s* 24hr webcams, *Black.White’s* internet forums, and endless newspaper column inches devoted to discussing characters and scenarios from the plethora of reality TV shows, provides a window and interface on a ‘real’ public space representing the modern social world whose ‘rights’ and ‘wrongs’ we can all debate and comment on.<sup>8</sup>

Just as Habermas cites charisma and the status of individuals as important to the expansion of certain public discourses, reality TV has its equivalents in the charms and personalities of on-screen characters from various shows. For example the characters from *Black.White* have a role in the construction of public discourses on race. Following Hall’s (1993) encoding/decoding model they are explicitly involved in a public conversation about its construction. However just as Habermas’ ‘public sphere’ was systematically disadvantaged by the machinations of the free market and state power, the ‘public sphere’ of reality TV is overrun by market principles and disadvantaged by an uneven distribution of wealth (ownership concentration in the media, the dominance of advertising and public relations) affecting who has control over the 21st

century production of texts. For example what are the dominant cultural meanings and 'frameworks of knowledge' (Hall 1993) embedding the shows narrative transcripts, production, and media(tion)? Each has material effects in reproducing the social.

The excessive alignment of commercial interests in the production of TV programming damages the free exchange of viewpoints necessary for the formation of an authentic Habermasian public sphere. Instead the space is harnessed and manipulated to secure the status quo or hegemony, a similar method to the ways the State in Habermas' model eroded 'public sphere' autonomy by controlling the flow of public information in the interests not of rational discourse but of manipulation.

In casting reality TV as an alternative form of public sphere we can see how 21st century intertextual flows<sup>9</sup> and overdetermination<sup>10</sup> fuse two central yet separate tenants of Habermas' model into one moment. Firstly it provides communal subject matter and public debate. Secondly this publicness and content is not an authentic representation of the world but rather a form of dominant manipulation where discourses shape the public's view of the world. Put in the context of race discourse in America reality TV embeds social hierarchies and difference as natural and 'real' when they are a cumulative construction with a distinct genealogy, a point Blumer makes in a conversation on public definitions:

Currents of view and currents of feeling come into being, sweeping along to positions of dominance and serving as polar points for the organisation of thought and sentiment. If the interaction becomes increasingly circular and reinforcing, devoid of serious inner opposition, such views grow, fuse, and become strengthened'. (Blumer 1988: 202)

### 1.3 Rethinking the Public Sphere: Herbert Blumer and the Public Event.

Blumer's 1955 article and theory of *Race Prejudice as a sense of Group Position* read at the dedication of the Robert E. Park Building at Fisk University provides a bridge between Habermas, reality TV and race discourse. His premise was that:

[r]ace prejudice presupposes, necessarily, that racially prejudiced individuals think of themselves as belonging to a given racial group. It means, also, that they assign to other racial groups those against whom they are prejudiced. Thus, logically and actually, *a scheme of racial identification is necessary as a framework for racial prejudice*. (Blumer 1988: 197 [italics mine])

What is most interesting about this notion of presupposed racial identification is the method in which groups would build up an image of themselves and each other. For Blumer this was done, not through generalising from their personal experience 'with concrete individuals in daily association', but rather through an overt 'public arena' or what I would like to extend and call a 'public event'. Two hundred and fifty years ago these spaces could be those described by Habermas, his salons and coffeehouses. Sixty years ago, in Blumer's era, these arenas or events would be 'legislative assemblies, public meetings,

conventions, the press, and the printed word [where w]hat goes on in this public arena attracts the attention of large numbers of the dominant and is felt as the voice and action of the group as such' (Blumer 1988: 204).

Today however, we see this public event on TV, and in specific genres like reality TV where stereotypes and social engineering define production decisions, a point commonly made by social commentators. 'Most producers wholeheartedly agree with *The Real World's* golden rule: casting is the most crucial element to the success<sup>11</sup> of a reality series...producers refer to the cast as characters, not real people' (Simon 2005: 191). The overplayed typecasting from shows like *Survivor*, *Big Brother* and the *Real World* with their ever present Gay Man, Wild Woman, Single Mom, Yuppie, Everybody's Friend, Redneck, Slacker, Victim has been shown to produce shows with huge followings which translate into large profits; as such there are those who believe social engineering works.

One important modification to Blumer's theory however that needs to be made, and provides advantage for this paper, concerns his theory's focus on prejudice among dominant group members. For Blumer racial identification, and the orientation this process engendered of social hierarchy and where one's own group should stand in the social order vis-à-vis another group, was conceptualised from the top down. But as Harvard Professor of Sociology Lawrence Bobo points out it 'may be applied to how members of a subordinate group come to view members of a dominant group [and] furthermore, these ideas may also be usefully applied to relations among and between racial minority groups in a multiethnic social setting' (Bobo 1999: 449). A question the text of my two program-viewing informants tries to answer.

In the next section I analyse a scene from the show and radio interviews with the two fathers to show how discourses on race are revealed in language, grammar and other devices which construct and reveal social positions with the aim of demonstrating how *Black.White* does more to reinforce current race discourse than it does to tackle it.

## **2. First Glance: Analysis of a Scene**

In this actual dialogue (please see Appendix A) from a scene in the show race is a central, surface theme, explicitly referenced in the actual dialogue. What is most interesting for me here is the opening narration element A001 – A010. Firstly, it is obviously a scripted segment as there are no hedges, no pauses, no gaps – everything is smooth and neat. Also important to note is how race, characters and stereotypes are all fed to the viewer on a plate: A004 'all white bar'; A005 'see my day in white'; A009 'proper grammar'; A010 'black community'; 'speak white'.

We are left in no doubt that there is a white space not open to all people and that this is a prime example of it. In the exchange, racist discourse does not seem hidden and buried beneath, but rather it remains extreme and overt. A017 and A018 define the neighbourhood as a 'white area' and infer that because of this 'we don't have any problems'.

Line A020 is an example of language being recruited on site to create authority (Gee 2005: 1). The unidentified male ‘grew up in this neighbourhood’ and as such has a ‘privileged’ capacity to speak about it. Line A022 refers to the area as a ‘bastion’ – a metaphor of war,<sup>12</sup> and places his world under siege, one of the ‘last’ unaffected places in a wider battle.

Perhaps the point to be taken from this scene from the show is that this is the type of racism we can take at face value, i.e. it does exist – it is, in this particular case the individual’s intent to separate groups and people on the basis of their skin colour.

An intent that is much less overt in the subsequent sections of text I analyse. Yet this is still extremely problematic, the show sets racism up as something solely located in the individual’s intent to discriminate and diverts attention away from historical and structural inequalities; the inherent white privilege ‘so woven into the unexamined institutional practices, habits of mind, and received truths’ (Brown 2002: 4) of Americans that they barely see it.

## **2.1 A White Father’s Point of View - Individualism**

The stereotypical and overt form of racism apparent above is itself a discourse model that disguises other more subtle forms of racism.

What follows below is an analysis of an NPR radio interview with Mr Marcotulli, the white father from the show. I have selected this text (please see Appendix B) because it provides insight into a discourse model (Gee 2005: 71) I call ‘individualism’, a theory of individual choice that ‘assumes that economic competition drives out discrimination’ (Brown 2002: 17). This discourse model or ideology provides a chain of causality that makes blaming the individual for any failure to get ahead in life seem plausible and for many, commonsensical.

To extend the discourse analysis and following the work of Norman Fairclough (2004) this can be phrased as a texturing of the relationship between personal responsibility and socio-economic standing in society. By ‘texturing’ he means the ‘work’ done textually i.e. the textual construction or ‘working up’ of that relationship.

Such a construction disguises notions of white privilege and structural inequalities making racism passive and unobtrusive. It conceals racial disadvantage/advantage under a cloak of neo-liberal individuality and omits the fact that inequalities are cumulative, another point made by Fairclough in the same article when he states ‘new capitalism’ is ‘discourse-driven’, his point being that language may have a more significant role in contemporary socio-economic changes than it has had in the past.

The following text is divided into two main sections ‘Data Set A’ and ‘Data Set B’. Set A is divided into stanzas, ‘a language unit that deals with a unitary topic or perspective within an ongoing discourse’ (Gaudio and Bialostok 2005: 56).

## 2.1.1 Data Set A

### Stanza 1

Stanza 1 orientates Mr Marcotulli's discourse. In line B007 he injects what Charlotte Linde (1983) calls a 'explanatory system' and Gaudio and Bialostok call a 'culture concept': a simplified mechanism to make sense of a complex world which is 'inevitably incomplete and likely to contain errors and contradictions' yet has 'internal linguistic and psychological coherence' (Gaudio and Bialostok 2005: 55). For example Mr Marcotulli's beliefs about the reasons for success in life, his notion that 'you get back what you put out', on the surface at least, make sense and are compelling because they appeal to widely held principles like fairness, equality of opportunity, and economic competition all things coincidentally resonate with the experiences of many white Americans.

However if what he says is true 'how are we to explain the persistently low levels of scholastic and economic achievement among African Americans, American Indians, and Latinos when compared with Americans of European (and, to some extent, Asian) descent?' (2005: 53).

Also in this first stanza, in line B001, 'life' is generalised as a universal experience. This is another example of over-simplification and functions as a subtle form of authority construction further reinforced by lines B002 'our perceptions', line B003 'what *we* expect to see', and the use of the collective noun 'world' in line B007, to create the notion of a universal group identity. By making the entire population of the world into a singular entity he produces a notion of sameness and equality whose construction assumes Mr Marcotulli, as a member of this singular entity, has the power to speak for everyone. His use of the verb to think, however, does implicitly acknowledge that consensus around his opinion might not be absolute. In the context of this text being from a national radio show on race, this hedge may also be considered a device to conceal or take spice out of his stance in order to be perceived as more reasonable.

A final point to take from stanza 1 is contained in lines B006 and B007 where the all-inclusive and universal group of the first three lines the 'we', becomes 'you'. This utterance understood in relation to B005 and its dismissal of racism can be taken as an implicit sign of division within US society. In other words, some people following the rules of economic competition or neoliberalism will get back what they put out, others as this newly divisive language change infers, will not.

### Stanza 2

In lines B008 to B013 he builds a 'prototypical simulation', something Gee notes is done from the social practices around us, in Marcotulli's case we can posit this as the experience of being white (Gee 2005: 76). This production of what is assumed to be a 'typical life situation', applicable to how 'everyone' (another collective noun) is reacted to you when feeling lousy', (Brown 2002: 35) makes white privilege invisible.

Firstly 'typical' is no such thing and varies across different social and cultural groups of people; his notion of 'outside' for example simplifies the heterogeneity of the globe and conceals his simulation as a specific place he has inside his head, a space he is familiar with. Secondly this 'prototypical simulation' in its presumption that people will react better to you when you feel good about yourself omits other possible outcomes involved in the 'black experience', which have nothing to do with feeling great about yourself, like racial profiling, an urban dilemma non-white communities suffer in excessive disproportion to white communities.

Read in light of stanza 1, which as noted constructs two worlds, Marcotulli's notion of feeling lousy about himself, can be read as an implication that it is others that feel a sense of failure about themselves, a subtle racial slur about one group from another. Furthermore, the claim that when he feels good about himself everything turns out right, can be extended to infer if blacks are complaining its because they don't feel good about themselves, something that his orientation and discourse model of 'individualism' and the personal responsibility for one's own situation infers.

### Stanza 3

In lines B014 through B016 Mr Marcotulli begins to hedge the central theme of his statement reiterated in B017 to B019. What once seemed a solid statement of fact becomes increasingly conditional, however his repetition as Gilles Deleuze notes 'forms the real power of language in speech and writing' (Deleuze cited in Rickels and Weber 2001: 95) because it gives cultural models infinite, rather than finite, existence, making them appear more 'natural'.

Overall these three stanzas taken together construct a discourse that omits recognition of structural inequalities and disguises racial hierarchies (Brown 2002: 27). Mr. Marcotulli's language, I would venture, is organised to negate white guilt and ignore the loss of opportunity some people face because of their race.

Another point to note from stanza 1 is Marcotulli's exploration of his own personal intentions<sup>33</sup> as an appropriate method to determine whether racism exists (Brown 2002: 39), which shifts focus from the wider societal hierarchies that exist, the structural imbalances Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of cultural, economic and social capital in *Distinction* sheds light on (1984) and what Cornel West puts eloquently in this passage. 'White suburbanites and middle-class black (and others) are preoccupied with the daily pursuit of the comfort of their material lives. In many cases they literally wall themselves off into comfortable communities, both physical and social, in which they can safely avert their eyes from the ugly realities that afflict so many of our people. Because they are able to buy cars and take the vacations they want, they are all too willing to either disregard the political and social dysfunctions afflicting the country or accept facile explanations for them' (West 2004: 65).

### 2.1.2 Data Set B

In this second data set (please see Appendix B: Data Set B) of the same interview I have chosen not to break it up into stanza chunks because the complete text from B020 to B042 is a good place to identify Linde's explanatory system at work. As mentioned earlier explanatory systems (Linde 1993), are 'theories about cause and effect in the world (and the cosmos) that are more or less shared among and rooted in the practices and beliefs of specific social groups. In everyday discourse they are typically implicit and unconscious, underlying the ways we narrate our own experiences and interpret the narratives of others ... one ideal property of explanatory systems is their internal linguistic and psychological coherence' (Gaudio and Bialostok 2005: 55).

Another way to explain this coherence is as a 'chain of causality', something I believe Mr Marcotulli produces in this data set. Through the assignment of agency to particular entities or individuals, see line B023, causality is encoded in discourse. To paraphrase Gaudio and Bialostok, what he does is create a sense that various parts of the story or his theory 'are logically connected to each other in terms of cause and effect'. In doing this he provides the listener – in this case the NPR audience and those in the NPR studio with a 'casual sequence of events' which seems 'adequate' or rather, well-reasoned and sound logically for a particular theory or event to play out (Linde 1987: 347).

In line B022 Mr. Marcotulli's simplification or 'nutshell' sets up the supposed statement of fact to follow. This supposed statement of fact negates his own whiteness as a colour – a common social theory – and sets up a distinction between himself and others in B023 and B024, 'whoever *you* are' and 'whatever skin colour *you* have'. He has a particular and possessive investment in his whiteness, which even though race may be a cultural and biological fiction, make whiteness the invisible social and legal norm and all other colours 'other'.

Mr Marcotulli continues to separate himself from the text in B025 and B026. Others have a 'predicament' not him, and they have 'two options', another example of a simplified cultural model, to deal with it. He then claims to 'look' at life in a certain way and with a certain 'attitude', which, for him, is the key to empowerment, negating economic or social capital, and inferring by inversion that people of 'colour' lack, the cultural values for success.

In lines B032 through B035 he omits talk of economic position and social opportunity as having any impact on life's outcomes, this conception makes the individual his unit of analysis and hides group dynamics. As Brown et al point out in *Whitewashing Race* 'one cannot assume that individuals are the only appropriate unit of analysis. By making this assumption...interpreters of contemporary racial inequality neglect the collective actions of groups, the role of intermediary institutions, and the cumulative effects of durable racial inequality' (Brown 2002: 17).

Furthermore following a reference to another group in line B029 he makes disparaging remarks in lines B030, B031 and B037 – angry, negative and stagnating. These statements about individual failure and attitudes are evidence of a derogatory stereotype within his explanatory model (Brown

2002: 40) and speak to the existence of wider intergroup dynamics denied in the organisation of Mr Marcotulli's text. A fact Blumer reinforces: 'in race prejudice there is a self-assured feeling on the part of the dominant racial group of being naturally superior or better. This is commonly shown in a disparagement of the qualities of the subordinate group. Condemnatory or debasing traits, such as laziness, dishonesty, greediness, unreliability, stupidity, deceit and immorality, are usually imputed to it' (Blumer 2002: 198).

## **2.2 Conclusions**

Mr Marcotulli's language about attitude and values needed to succeed is a discourse of neoliberal individualism and 'makes it possible to perpetuate racial domination without making any reference to race at all' (Gaudio and Bialostok 2005: 53), a similar conclusion Gaudio and Bialostok made clear in their analysis of everyday racism in white middle class discourse. 'We suggest that when arguments about inequality appeal to culture without referring to actual histories of race, class, and power relations, the effect is to deny that the dominant political and economic system in the United States (and elsewhere) is structured by race – that it is, in fact, racist' (ibid: 54). Mr Marcotulli's discourse involves a persistent negative stereotyping of African-Americans, which has the subtle effect of blaming people of colour themselves for the Black-White gap in socioeconomic standing, and ignores any relationship between groups.

## **3. *The Black Father and Group Recognition***

Focussing on individuals as Mr Marcotulli does ignores deeply embedded patterns of discrimination and the actual consequences of this – for example a racially biased allocation of public resources to schools would impact on an individual's education and job experience. This focus obscures the relationship between racial groups 'a fundamental element in the development of durable racial inequality' (Brown 2002: 17).

Group position for Blumer is a very subtle 'orientation or broad-spectrum understanding on where the dominant group should stand relative to the subordinate group' (Bobo 1999: 450). However as noted earlier it is possible to view this process from the bottom up too and note as Fairclough does (2004) the ways that language as an element of the social at all levels, constructs the worlds in which we live.

In this next set of data (please see Appendix C) from the same NPR radio Mr Sparks, the black father from the show, constructs and reinforces Blumer's theory in his language. He talks about two separate groups and concretises their 'realness' and continuant separation through an overt race discourse concerned with economic reparation – a distinct worldview that requires deference to a hierarchal relationship and an implicit group orientation.

From C001 to C018, Mr Sparks' constructs the social 'reality' of two separate groups living in unequal relation to each other. His words define a segregated world and reinforce it throughout. His 'we' in line C001 is not part of the

'America' collective noun in line C004, who he makes a conscious agent, responsible for 'forgetting' things his own group, have a right too.

The use of 'black' in lines C005, C006, C016 and 'white' in line C009 allows him to talk about two groups in the third person. His 'we' of line C001 vanishes in lines C005, C006, C016 and instead his language and grammar reinforces the notion of two 'real' groups, each homogeneously closed-off and impenetrable by the other.

This is a gross oversimplification and omits the existence of certain people(s) and other racial groups. However it reinforces a chain of causality that connects line C001 to lines C018-C019. 'How are we to get passed' he repeats, inferring history has given one group the economic power and the other nothing. I would venture this representation of his group's situation, continually places it in a subordinate position to 'the white generation' because it puts the whole argument on an economic footing rather than one based on the intellectual, social and cultural goods people are capable of producing. Twice, C008 and C014, he says, that 'nothing has been passed' on in his group, a simplified discourse model that reinforces once again the economic as the only reliable indicator of comparison social and eliminates a more nuanced understanding of power that might include Bourdieuan (1984) concepts about capital in its various forms.

The subject matter of this passage is an overt example of race discourse between a subordinate group and a dominant one – an utterance of inequality. Yet by simplifying the story to an economic one inferring all Euro-Americans should give money to all African-Americans it hides taken-for-granted ideas that perpetuate inequality.

His inference in lines C008, C014 and C017 is that if his group had money they would be equal with the other, implicitly acknowledged, dominant group. This class-based discourse model sounds plausible and logically sound, for example it is an attempt to 'right past wrongs', which presents a justifiable chain of causality, however it is a vast oversimplification that ignores all-ready existent structural inequalities of US society, the institutionalised benefits of being white and the socio-cultural realities this engenders. For example providing people with money will not solve cumulative social processes like a racially biased legal-system and negative stereotypes.

Ironically Mr Sparks's argument, which on the surface could be viewed as a rebuttal to Mr Marcotulli's individualism discourse model, uses a very similar logic, visible in lines C011, C012, where Mr Sparks' equates 'power' with 'money'. For Mr Sparks economic equality will solve race problems, or put another way once there is economic parity the reasons behind a person's success will be down to the individual. This is a good example of how 'more powerful groups in society can influence less powerful groups through Discourse models' (Gee 2005: 81).

In line C016 we see an example of what Gee calls situated meaning (Gee 2005: 78). 'On their back' is a literal allusion to the bricks and mortar carried by the working class in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the construction of American buildings and communications. Since a non-defined and dominant 'white' group received the economic rewards of the expansion, Mr Sparks constructs a chain of causality that entitles him (he speaks for the group, in

line C018 the 'we' has returned), to money. This is the only way his group will 'get over'.

What this passage demonstrates is how a subordinate group assigns prejudice to another group and in the process entrenches its own position in relation to that group. While there is much historical evidence from which Mr Sparks can construct his explanatory system, to blame and put everyone who is white in the same homogenous space and at fault for social inequality is a gross-simplification, which reproduces the racism already contained in the group relationship. It is also problematic logically because it leaves him with only an economic avenue to pursue in terms of righting past wrongs, when it might be the case that the point he wants to make is similar to my own, the idea that 'racism is a sense of group position based on the accumulation of racial advantage' (Brown 2002: 32).

Instead Mr Sparks dialogue reduces the historical and social complexity of reality and events, erasing much of the relevant substance to these 'stories', and leaving an inaccurate and problematic simplification in place, a more general accusation that could be levelled at the show on a whole.

Mr Sparks discourse model encourages essentialisms of all sorts and is a dangerous sort of racism. It reduces 'heterogeneous singularity to homogenous individuality, identified with a group or ethnic group' (Rickels and Weber 2001: 95). This lets general meanings, i.e. stereotypes, flourish and stand in for the real experience of individuals.

The show and television in general plays on this sort of simplification. In the construction of insurmountable difference between groups and the impossibility of them being friends without financial repatriation Mr Sparks utterances reduce complex social encounters to simplistic ideas identified with a colour, a face, a name, or a noun and no doubt play into the dominant power structure in society.

#### ***4. The Viewer and Reception***

Audiences were once thought to be passive, non-contributing recipients of the texts they viewed. They were meant to be reactionless and easily duped. In the modern era of interactive technologies (blogs, message boards, emails, texting) it's easy to see ways in which viewers engage and become far more than passive recipients.

Nonetheless this does not mean the average TV viewer doesn't believe some level of what they see on TV, and uses it to make sense of the world. As Samuel Weber points out televisual media 'constitutes the largely unquestioned basis of what most people consider to be 'real'. [And r]eality and identity are both derived from a relatively unconscious interpretation of visual perception' (Rickels and Weber 2001: 95).

Another way to understand this sentiment and viewer practice is through M.A.K. Halliday's (1978) discussion of Bernstein's idea of the 'code'. For Bernstein codes are 'above the linguistic system', they are not a language in the way registers or dialects are but rather a 'method' of information transmission between the macro-cultural levels of the social system and the

micro-individual level. Codes are ‘symbolic orders of meaning generated by the social system’ (Halliday 1978: 111). They contain information about the dominant classificatory system, subcultures and relations. These patterns of culture are transmitted through Althusserian ISAs (1971) like the school and media. By learning the codes and interpreting their meanings one learns culture but also the semiotic principles and relations of one’s own subcultures within this culture.

What is useful about Bernstein’s idea of codes and what I describe next in an analysis of Hall’s decoding/encoding framework is the way both are concerned with the construction of interpolated groups, i.e. groups people identify with.

If racism is in a major part about the relationship between groups it begs the question how does a programme like *Black.White* re-present the relationship between groups? How does it feed the social construction we all live? In this section I analyse data from two viewers of the show to investigate how they thought the show constructed groups and see if these ‘codes’ leave any trace in their utterances.

For Blumer, group position is formed by a continuous process of definition and redefinition between the different racial groups and the relations between them (Blumer 1988: 202). This process of definition is done through communication between ‘leaders, prestige bearers, officials, group agents, dominant individuals [TV programs], and ordinary laymen’ who define and present to one another the characteristics of various groups. Today I would extend this list to include news programmes, ‘reality’ TV shows, documentaries and other public media events or televisual discourse.

I would further submit that TV viewers take the information and codes they consume and later through talk, chatting, stories, gossip, anecdotes, messages, pronouncements, orations, sermons and preachments, present these media definitions about subcultures and their place in hierarchical frameworks to the wider world. If these are subtle, non-obvious racial stereotypes, like those we saw in Mr Marcotulli and Mr Sparks texts, they would come together in a complex interaction where they ‘run against one another, influence one another, modify each other, feed on each other, intensify each other, and emerge and fuse together in new forms’ (Blumer 1988: 202). This is how racism/Racism (big and little d’s) can quite often become polite, implicit, normal and unintentional (Brown 2002: 43), i.e. embedded in the social and not just the individuals actions.

#### 4.1 My Informants

I interviewed two 20-year-old women separately on different days straight after watching Episode 3 of *Black.White*. Episode 3 as described by FX Channel press release: ‘The Wurgels and Sparks lock horns over language and behaviour. As the friction builds between Carmen and Renee, Carmen turns to an outsider for insight into the black experience. Bruno and Carmen encounter hostility in an all-black neighbourhood, and Nick’s fascination with the gangster lifestyle raises concerns for Brian and Renee’.

The interviews were semi structured and designed to elicit personal statements about the show. I wanted to see how the viewers connected what

they saw on *Black.White* to issues of race in their own lives. In each case we spoke for around 30 mins immediately after watching Episode 3.

#### 4.1.1 Informant 1

In this first section I asked my informant if she thought the relationship between ‘blacks’ and ‘whites’ on the show was typical and something she had seen for herself in DC. In line D003 she offers me a ‘personal experience’ as evidence to support where she’s seen racial segregation locally.

This story struck me as full of stereotypes, many of the same ones we had just watched in episode 3. My informant spoke of ‘typical nice barber shops’, ‘school’ being looked at – all elements in the episode. She spoke about the community as being outside and distinct from her, she was always textually othering it, D009, D017, D022, D024, D030, D031, D032; something constant in the series and evident in my earlier scene analysis.

Following Gaudio and Bialostok and their emphasis on ‘unmarked assumptions’, we can mark my informant’s conversational story, describing a regular day when she travelled through a ‘black’ neighbourhood as an example of stereotype production (2005: 52). Add Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 185) notes on story construction and we can say her short-term memory of the show mixes with her personal experiences and more general societal generalisations or ‘codes’ and directly/indirectly influence her decoding and encoding process. ‘Van Dijk’s model can thus explain the cognitive processes of the text recipients: isolated experiences, statements, and symbols are assigned to general schemata and confirm existing prejudices’ (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 185).

Another feature of her story and its openness is the way it allows the speaker to make generalisations but not have to take responsibility for them. My informant is not suggesting any measures be taken to address the poverty in the community she merely relates a story.

This brief example demonstrates how what was produced for TV on *Black.White* fed into the story one viewer told about herself. A minor indication of the impact TV codes have on individuals.

#### 4.1.2 Informant 2

In this data set I asked informant 2 how ‘real’ she thought the events on *Black.White* were. In lines E001 to E003 a distinction is made between what is ‘real’ and what ‘makes drama’, quickly followed by a hedge, the verb to think in line E002. I would note this hedge and the pause that followed as strengthening her next point.

In E006 to E008 ‘reality’ is not equated with what goes on in ‘real life’, a distinction between TV world and social reality. In line E013 action is equated with reality and then in E014 action is made into the meaning of reality TV. I would posit these linguistic actions as evidence that this informant is at least implicitly aware, if not explicitly aware, of TV genres, production considerations and fabrication in the show.

## 4.2 Media as a Modern Institution of Power

Following Michel Foucault investigation of 19<sup>th</sup> century institutions and their role in enhancing the power relations of domination in capitalist societies (1977) it is possible to explore the Media, as an institution of power, a disciplinary device manipulated by persons and relations in the capitalist system, to enhance the dominant power; a post-modern institution of power.

According to Foucault, social knowledge is buried deep within the political and socio-economic institutions, practices and structures through which power is exercised in modern societies. For Habermas we could cite the Public Sphere, for Blumer the 'big event' and for Hall the TV message. Each provides a space where forms of knowledge and modes of social organisation emerge, expand and in the face of resistance still consolidate their dominance.

One way to get at this deeply buried material is through the utterances of directors and producers who take the production decisions behind shows. While individual persons and practices are obviously embedded in various and larger frameworks of knowledge, these producers of social knowledge and imagery, should still be analysed to discover what may or may not be implicit in their outlook.

In the NPR transcript of Mr. Alvarez (please see Appendix F), Executive producer of *Black.White*, there is constant hedging throughout his text. However in certain spaces the hedges are replaced by definitive statements about the objective world, like line F014 the 'award winning director' and F016 'documentarian of the *War Room*', both instantiated in a precise manner and in opposition to the hedges, to lend authority to the show and connect to wider legitimising discourses.

Later there is a passage describing how scenes for the show which didn't use hidden cameras were broached with the patrons and establishments the crew entered. Note the contradiction in F122 where Alvarez explains they told people they were 'really doing a documentary'. The charade was a method trying to elicit as 'real' F132 a response 'from people as we could'. Seen in the context of the show's subject material 'real' is problematic. Also the 'we' in F134 stands in for one particular social formation – the actors, the crew, the programme – or put another way the whole production process, and is conditional, 'as we could', revealing the need to produce a certain situation, racial division, throughout the show

In F124 'people' is othered as a distinct group. Yet because the black family were the only 'people' who moved, the other family are LA natives, the white producer's language can be read as problematic.

Line F127 speaks of 'new experiences'. Read in light of F124 it leads me to speculate that the production team was looking to manufacture racist situations and 'new experience's stands in for racism. It would also explain the continuous hedging which may hide insider production knowledge about how contrived the situations on the show were. Alternatively the hedges may just be constant reminders of the difficulty many feel when talking about race.

In F159 we get an intertextual reference to other reality shows where there is a prize to be won. However this 'end of the tunnel' reference can be read in

many ways. Perhaps no light at the end of the tunnel speaks to the never-ending 'reality' of race and racism and by inference the added 'reality' of this particular reality show over all others.

## **5. Conclusions**

I was in the 'couch-potato position of inertia' (Virilio 2000) and mildly distracted when the dialogue on *Black.White* first struck me. On closer inspection, and as the series progressed, these scenes seemed far too self-evident and overdone. The racism on screen always appeared intentional, obvious and individual with no recognition of racism lodged in the structure of society.

There was no discussion of why the white family always spoke on any subject regardless of their knowledge ability, while the black family always appeared more restraint. There was no allusion to or consideration of the cultural capital of Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984). There was no questioning the 'reality' of the show. The characters, the ads, the reviews all spoke of a program 'confronting racism'. Yet the 'reality' was quite different

This paper has been about revealing the racist discourse instantiated in the texts of the show. I have only been able to touch on certain parts but enough to provide some evidence of the way racist discourse is subtly perpetuated and ignored by the show.

My evidence comes from language. On one level there was a soft, polite and practically invisible racism embedded in discourse on individualism and notions of free-market neoliberalism, what Omi and Winant (1994) call 'the new form of racial hegemony' (p. 148). It appeared logically sound and almost common-sensical however in its words, construction and connections it concealed racial slurs, structural inequalities and cumulative problems that are racist. On another level racism came through discourse of group identification that hid the hierarchies it presupposes and the essentialisms it encouraged under notions of solidarity and likeness by colour.

Across the four types of texts I analysed – a scene from the show; two participants off camera, two viewers and a producer – these themes have been consistent. And while it is impossible to provide the full transcripts of each interview it is possible to note the ways in which these themes stood out.

For example the defence of individualism, best defined as an assumption that social life results chiefly or exclusively from the actions of self-motivated, interest-seeking persons (Brown 2002: 15) and that it is the individual and their intentions alone that explain racism was available in the overt dialogue of Mr. Marcotulli, was there in the implicit economic discourse of Mr Sparks, was obvious in the racism of the unidentified gentleman in the scene from the show and can be pulled out of the viewers and executive producers texts too. A similar point can be made about the second constant theme, group identification and construction. This was easier to identify, as it was always visible in things like abstract collective nouns, intertextual references to wider discourses and the 'othering' by elite social actors like the executive producer.

The existence of these themes across Hall's four-stage theory of mass communication – in production (executive producer), in circulation ('actors' from show), in consumption (informant 1 – makes her own story from what she saw) and in reproduction (informant 2 – questions its authenticity) – is evidence of a contradiction in the show's stated message.

Rather than confront racist discourse *Black.White* is complicit in its extension. It adds weight to the concept of 'neoliberal individualism' and personal responsibility by painting a picture of an inaccurate, or rather white America, as a place where if you try hard enough to succeed you will. It accentuates the legitimacy of racial identification – the overt and sometimes overly stressed need to affirm group identity – as a simple tool of solidarity rather than a deeply complicated mechanism that Blumer believes is necessary in the construction of racial prejudice.

By engaging language on two levels, the concrete and the abstract, I tried to highlight how language builds social structures like race(ism) and makes them part of social reality through television messages and racist codes embedded in viewing and production practices. *Black.White's* stereotypical determination of social reality effects the selection of certain structural possibilities at the exclusion of others. Social Justice and fundamental societal change are impossible when programmes like this are everywhere and all the time. They are mechanisms for maintaining the status quo and merely reproduce it.

## Notes

- 1 This project follows the Americanist practice and considers texts to be products of linguistic knowledge (grammar), framed through social discourse, and 'instantiated at the site and in the moment'. Under this definition, texts are not exclusively written documents; texts may be spoken, signed, danced, carved, painted or otherwise expressed.
- 2 For a succinct definition of the evolution of reality TV from the 1930s to 2005 see Simon (2005).
- 3 Television's rhetoric as a 'mobile and fluid transmission of unrelated texts (ads, programs, promotional material) becomes an overall mode of experience that we can call watching TV' (Spigel 1992: x).
- 4 Since 2003 the Emmys has included a 'Reality' program category.
- 5 It has recently been claimed that two of the white family members on *Black.White* were actors. <http://blog.airoday.com/2006/03/20/it-don't-matter-if-youre/> [accessed 29 April 2006]
- 6 Influential books and authors to note are *The Nationwide Project* by David Morley and Charlotte Brunson, Stuart Hall whose work and Encoding/Decoding model is recognised as foundational in research into how audiences are active consumers rather than passive recipients, and *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* by Shaun Moores a required undergraduate text in the field of Cultural Studies.
- 7 David Harvey – 'a configuration of things that come together' is a useful analogy (2004)

- <sup>8</sup> An immediate concern to note with this model is how messages produced by media and communicated from the dominant core affect not so much how we classify 'but the very classificatory categories themselves' (Lash and Urry 1994: 29).
- <sup>9</sup> 'Intertextuality emphasizes that no text is an island: it refers to the complex structure of interrelations that exist between single literary works or media products...[it] is not merely or even primarily a stylistic device, for example the use in literature or media of a metaphor, character, or plot line originating from another author...[Intertextuality is] the process in which elements of discourse communicate specific meanings to audiences by implicit reference to other, familiar discourses, themes, genres, or media, which may also be in or implied by the context of reception' (Jensen 1995: 119-120).
- <sup>10</sup> 'When we come to texts as elements of social events, the 'overdetermination' of language by other social elements becomes massive: texts are not just effects of linguistic structures and orders of discourse, they are also effects of other social practices and structures, as well as of the casual powers of social agents, so that it becomes difficult to separate out the factors shaping texts' (Fairclough 2004: 16).
- <sup>11</sup> Success = commercial revenues produced from ads, merchandise spin-offs and syndication. All things which have much to do with self-identification and the interpolated individual.
- <sup>12</sup> I agree with Ian Hacking when he says; 'Metaphors influence the mind in many unnoticed ways. The willingness to describe fierce disagreement in terms of metaphors of war makes the very existence of real wars seem more natural, more inevitable, more a part of the human condition. It also betrays us into an insensibility toward the very idea of war, so that we are less prone to be aware of how totally disgusting real wars are' (Hacking 1999: viii).
- <sup>13</sup> 'Today, many white Americans are concerned only with whether they are, individually, guilty of something called racism. Having examined their souls and concluded they are not personally guilty of any direct act of discrimination, many whites convince themselves that they are not racists and then wash their hand of the problem posed by persistent racial inequality. The predilection to search for personal guilt has been reinforced by a Supreme Court that analogously locates the constitutional problem of racial injustice solely in an individual's intent to discriminate' (Brown 2002: 4).

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## ***Appendices***

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **Scene from TV show *Black.White***

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NARRATION by Mr. Sparks (Reality show participant and father who wears white make-up).

A001 Today will be the first day that I work at Leo's bar.

A002 It's a little all-white bar.

A003 There's a bartender.

A004 It's cool, I'm being a fly on the wall,

A005 get to see my day in white.

A006 You want to establish a rapport with all these guys.

A007 If you take care of them,

A008 they're going to take care of you.

A009 I have to speak proper grammar

A010 or as the black community says I have to speak white.

#### **ACTUAL DIALOGUE**

A011 Ok, I'm going to have to watch you.

A012 You must be a real regular right here.

#### **NARRATION**

A013 Then I got into some conversation with a guy,

A014 it was so easy because they thought I was so white up in there.

A015 I just asked them a simple question,

A016 what is the neighborhood like?

#### **UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2:**

A017 Yeah, it's pretty much a white area.

A018 We don't have any problems.

#### **Mr. SPARKS:**

A019 Oh, ok. Fit right in.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2:

A020 I grew up in this neighborhood  
A021 and this is one of the last  
A022 somewhat unaffected bastions  
A023 of middle class Caucasian America  
A024 inside Los Angeles.

Mr. SPARKS:

A025 ok.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2:

A026 Most of the cities around this area changed significantly.  
A027 This is the one that's almost like  
A028 it's been insulated for some reason.

Mr. SPARKS:

A029 Wow. I kind of got that feeling  
A030 when I came through the neighborhood.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2:

A031 And the neighborhood wants to stay that way.

Mr. SPARKS:

A032 Exactly.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2:

A033 They don't want a lot of change.  
A034 They don't want a lot of building.  
A035 They don't want a lot of integration,  
A036 because they've seen what's happened in the peripheral communities.

Mr. SPARKS:

A037 Oh, ok.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE #2:

A038 And it's taken the quality of life down.

**APPENDIX B: Data Set A****NPR radio interview with Mr Marcotulli, White Father from *Black.White***

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## Stanza 1

Bo01 I think a great deal of what we see in life,  
Bo02 our perceptions, are based on  
Bo03 what we expect to see,  
Bo04 and I'm a big believer in that,  
Bo05 not to get, negate racism,  
Bo06 but you get back  
Bo07 from the world what you put out

## Stanza 2

Bo08 When I go outside  
Bo09 and I feel lousy about myself,  
Bo10 I get a different reaction  
Bo11 from everyone that I meet  
Bo12 than I do  
Bo13 when I feel great about myself.

## Stanza 3

Bo14 So it really,  
Bo15 there is some validity to the,  
Bo16 in my mind,  
Bo17 to you do get out,  
Bo18 get back from the world  
Bo19 what you put out.

**APPENDIX B: Data Set B****NPR radio interview with Mr Marcotulli, White Father from *Black.White***

---

Mr. MARCOTULLI:

Bo20 Life doesn't turn out  
Bo21 the way anybody wants it.  
Bo22 In a nutshell,  
Bo23 whoever you are, whatever skin color  
Bo24 you have,  
Bo25 whatever your predicament in life is,  
Bo26 you have two options.  
Bo27 One is to look at life

B028 with the brightest and most positive attitude  
B029 and empower yourself,  
B030 or be angry  
B031 and negative  
B032 and look for things  
B033 so that you can excuse your,  
B034 blame your problems  
B035 on something else.  
B036 And that is disempowering  
B037 and stagnating.  
B038 So in a nutshell,  
B039 again there is racism,  
B040 but a lot has to do with  
B041 how you  
B042 approach life.

## APPENDIX C

### NPR radio interview with Mr Sparks, Black Father from *Black.White*

---

MR. SPARKS:

Co01 how can we really get past,  
Co02 I mean, of course,  
Co03 we would like to move on and get past,  
Co04 but the things that I think America is forgetting  
Co05 to realize is that black,  
Co06 from black to black,  
Co07 generation after generation,  
Co08 nothing has been passed on.  
Co09 From white to white,  
Co10 from slavery to the power,  
Co11 the money,  
Co12 that's come from generation to generation.  
Co13 So, the things that my ancestry had to go through to,  
Co14 just passed on nothing.  
Co15 But the white generation,  
Co16 since the black built the America on their back,  
Co17 everything has passed on through white.  
Co18 So, how are we to get passed  
Co19 and just get over?

**APPENDIX D:****Informant 1**

---

Do01 Oh my god,  
Do02 especially in DC.  
Do03 I can give you a personal experience;  
Do04 when I went to teach at an elementary school  
Do05 last semester  
Do06 I went every Friday,  
Do07 every Friday,  
Do08 so we'd take a bus,  
Do09 we'd go to this community,  
Do10 right, and it would be one of those autobuses  
Do11 I don't know if you've seen them  
Do12 but you can see through the window  
Do13 and everything like that,  
Do14 but you get me from an outside perspective,  
Do15 like people can see you through the window  
Do16 and oh my gosh we'd just be driving  
Do17 through that town  
Do18 and people would look at us  
Do19 and I knew they were looking  
Do20 at us  
Do21 because we were white kids  
Do22 in the black neighbourhood,  
Do23 you know.  
Do24 It was completely black,  
Do25 like every person walking there was,  
Do26 all, there were barber shops  
Do27 that you would find here in DC  
Do28 you know the typical nice barber shops  
Do29 and also like I don't know,  
Do30 like the whole community  
Do31 was a black  
Do32 kind of run down community  
Do33 and the school  
Do34 all black students, a  
Do35 couple, were there a couple of latinos?  
Do36 I don't know.

**APPENDIX E****Informant 2**

---

- E001 that's not real,  
E002 don't think its real at all,  
E003 that's what makes it drama,  
E004 its like oh my gosh  
E005 you can't believe this happened.  
E006 Reality, but I don't think reality means  
E007 like, um its a portrayal  
E008 of what goes on in real life,  
E009 I feel like its just happening,  
E010 its real.  
E012 I mean obviously they can go back  
E013 and edit but its not like its action,  
E014 that's what reality TV means to me.  
E015 It doesn't mean  
E016 oh that's 'the Real World and that's what happens in the real world'.  
E017 No way,  
E018 you're not going to have a bunch of people,  
E019 I mean its set up  
E020 to be like that  
E021 but they just say reality TV  
E022 meaning like these aren't professional actors  
E023 they're just there.

**APPENDIX F****Mr. Alvarez, Executive Producer of *Black.White***

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- F001 Well, you know  
F002 we were kind of  
F003 brought into the show,  
F004 John Landgraf, you know,  
F005 from FX had kind of  
F006 come up with the idea  
F007 of doing a show  
F008 that explored, you know,  
F009 kind of the territory  
F010 that this show eventually explored  
F011 and he then brought it to R.J. Cutler who's,

F012 you know,  
F013 one of the other executive producers on the show.  
F014 Award winning,  
F015 you know,  
F016 documentarian of the War Room.

Mr. ALVAREZ:

F111 I mean,  
F112 you know,  
F113 we kind of  
F114 went into the situation telling,  
F115 you know,  
F116 and talked with different,  
F117 you know,  
F118 shop owners  
F119 and what not  
F120 and told them  
F121 that we were, you know,  
F122 really doing a documentary on,  
F123 you know,  
F124 on people  
F125 moving to Los Angeles  
F126 and their  
F127 new experiences in this city.  
F128 So, we kind of  
F129 went into that way,  
F130 you know,  
F131 to try  
F132 and get as real  
F133 of a response  
F134 from people as we could.

Mr. ALVAREZ:

F151 You know,  
F152 we tried to,  
F153 you know,  
F154 kind of position the show  
F155 and to market the show  
F156 so that people would, you know,  
F157 see that

F158 there's no prize

F159 at the e