



**Media and “Race”**

**volume 3  
issue 1**

**APRIL 2011**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Editorial: Media and “Race”  
By Sandy Watson. University of Melbourne, Australia
2. Making The White Folk Angry: The Media, “Race” and Electoral Politics in the United Kingdom in 2010  
By David Bates. University of Sunderland, England
3. Post-Raciality or a Re-Imagining of Whiteness? An Interview with Clarence E. Walker  
By Sandy Watson. University of Melbourne, Australia
4. “Aussie Humour” Or Racism? *Hey Hey It’s Saturday* and the Denial of Racism in Online Responses to News Media Articles  
By Clemence Due. University of Adelaide, Australia
5. Mediating Diaspora, Identity and Ethnicity: An Interview with Myria Georgiou  
By Sandy Watson. University of Melbourne, Australia
6. Book Review: *Newsgames: Journalism At Play* (Ian Bogost, Simon Ferrari and Bobby Schweizer, 2010)  
By Daniel Golding. University of Melbourne, Australia

# EDITORIAL: Media and “Race”

Sandy Watson

University of Melbourne, Australia

*The mediation of racism via mass media of all kinds is not the only source of its devastating impact, but it also operates in a molecular and penetrative fashion throughout the capillaries and pores of today’s world... Likewise, the endless routines of media flows put daily flesh on ethnic identifications of oneself and one’s visualized community.*

-- Downing and Husband<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between media and the animation of racisms is complex, as Downing and Husband intimate. Media in all of their institutional, cultural and democratic permutations have been intimately connected with the shaping and challenging of narratives of “race” and ethnicity throughout history<sup>2</sup>. These corollaries have if anything gained complexity over the past three decades, with the proliferation of user-generated media technologies pluralising and democratising media content on the one hand, and advances in global media networks on the other.

This ‘Media and “Race”’ issue of PLATFORM sets out to explore the imbricating relationship between media and broader cultural and political discourse in re-vivifying the essentialisms that underpin racial thinking, whether these masquerade in the language of culture and ethnicity or in the imperatives and determinisms of the market and economy. This is a timely discussion, given the paradoxes of the past decade which, on the one hand, saw the United States described as “post-racial” following the 2008 election of President Barack Obama (Edge, 2010), and on the other, saw racisms remain prominent in headlines around the world: the banning of Islamic face veiling in France and Belgium in 2010; France’s repatriation of Romani gypsies throughout 2010; and the 2005 Cronulla Riots in Australia being three recent examples.

These events illuminated the innately chameleonic and resilient nature of notions of “race” and racism. This transformative capacity of “race” is not new. The discursive transmutations of “race” and racisms through varying epistemological prisms such as religion, biology, science, social Darwinism and culture over the past five hundred years have been abundantly explored (see for example, Goldberg, 1993; Hollingsworth, 2006). This adaptive quality, as Stuart Hall elucidates, is the very essence of race, in that it “is not a permanent human or social deposit which is simply waiting there to be triggered off when the circumstances are right. It has no natural and universal law of development. It does not always assume the same shape (Hall, 1978: 26, cited in Hollingsworth, 2006: 45).

The seemingly incontrovertible disavowal of “race” by the middle of the twentieth century, largely in response to the atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust where racial science provided predication for genocide (Lentin, 2008, p. 495), has also served to emphasise the ongoing resilience of racial thinking. Race was expunged from public discourse and scholarly focus, and judged by newly self-proclaimed “race neutral” or “colour

blind” modern liberal states as a discredited mode of thinking. What occurred as a result, as van Dijk, Stratton, Goldberg and others describe, is that discourses of tolerance worked to deny the issue of “race” as having any contemporary relevance, based on the presupposition that the legislation against racism, the expunging of outdated racial science, and implementation of policies and programs promoting ideals of tolerance, affirmative action, equal opportunity and egalitarianism, meant that the injustices and inequities of race had been laid to rest (van Dijk, 1993; Goldberg, 2002, 2009; Lentin, 2004, 2008; Stratton, 1998).

“Race” was not dead, however, merely different, as French philosopher Etienne Balibar demonstrated with his enunciation of “neo-racism”, the post-second world war emergence of a culturally expressed racism. As Balibar describes, “a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but ‘only’ the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions” (Balibar, 1991a). The work of scholars such as Martin Barker (1982) and Robert Miles (1993) generated a snowballing in awareness of these new, cultural variants of exclusion and differentiation, and of their more sophisticated, subtle modalities compared with the tabooed racisms of the past (Dijk, 1993).

The dichotomy between denunciations of “race” and yet ongoing racisms has lent momentum to an increase in theoretical approaches examining the relationship between racism and, respectively, the state and globalisation. The proliferation of new policies apparently utilising racial thinking under the imprimatur of protecting national boundaries has seen scholarly attention refocus on the state. Critical race theorist David Theo Goldberg (2002, 2006, 2009) has argued influentially that the foundational classificatory status of “race” in the state’s formation continues to exert an influence in modern democratic governments (see also Lentin, 2004; and Amin, 2010). As Goldberg elucidates: “The apparatuses and technologies employed by modern states have served variously to fashion, modify, and reify the terms of racial expression, as well as racist exclusions and subjugation” (2002: 4). This is similar to French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault’s conceptualisation of race as a technology of power. Foucault argued that biopower was inherently a racialising form of power, conceptualised and made possible through a central normative and normalising function that strives to manage, administer, and survey biological forms of life as a way of inherently managing these areas of life (Foucault, 2003).

There has also been an aggregation of scholarly works examining the relationship between global changes and racialisation, including the argument that changes in economic, labour, social and cultural relations work to maintain relations of privilege and underscore divisions of racialisation (Bhattacharyya, Gabriel, and Small, 2002). John Gabriel (1997) has argued that global changes such as the growth of global institutions and trading blocs, migration, new technologies and transnational corporations have mobilised fears and anxieties resulting in a re-assertion of old identities based around racialised and national lines. For Stephen Castles (1996), these anxieties converge around local experiences of poverty and unemployment. Increasingly fluid and migratory population movements locate disgruntled workers in more intimate contact with migrants workers who, previously sought after for their ability to fulfill specific labour requirements, are now stigmatised along cultural and ethnic lines for taking what are deemed as local jobs, contributing to a rise in racially-based discourses which is at times actively encouraged by politicians.

Whilst these theories of state, biopolitical and globalised racisms all have their own analytical assumptions and foci, they emphasise a number of research priorities. The first is

that they acknowledge the pragmatic, quotidian categorisations that continue to breathe new life into the stereotypical thinking that underpins racialisations. This draws attention to the importance of continuing to undertake research that examines the local and historical contexts within which these occur. Equally they also highlight the crucial relationship between normative discourse and the materialisation of distinctions. This speaks to the need for sustained critical examination of the ways in which normative discourse is shaped, including the innumerable interconnections between prevailing (and countervailing) political discourses, media and other cultural forms. And, specifically, for persistent scrutiny of how culturally and economically sanctioned ideas provide carriage for redefinition and renewal of distinctions and exclusions of difference.

### **MEDIA, "RACE" AND RACIALISATIONS**

As John Fiske summarises, media play a pivotal role in "the social circulation of discourse and thus play a formative role in social and political change" (1995, p.10). This can be usefully seen in relation to discourses of whiteness, as highlighted by the literature on racism and globalisation. As John Gabriel articulates, media is intricately connected with the "mercurial" nature of whiteness and its continual re-definition against a notion of "otherness" which shifts in historical and geographical circumstances (1997, p. 48). Two notable examples in which this relationship is examined are in the mapping of media's role in the racialisation and assimilation into whiteness of the Irish and Jewish communities at differing historical conjunctures. The authors show how newspaper commentary and the representations of the Catholic Church were vital in constructing and normalising the re-positioning of the Irish within discourses of whiteness in the United States during the eighteenth century (Bhattacharyya et al, 2002; Gabriel, 1997).

Similarly, media and other institutions have been vital in the articulation of the Jewish throughout history, as Bhattacharyya, Gabriel and Small (2002) describe in relation to the "Jack the Ripper" murders of prostitutes in London's East End in 1888. As the authors describe, the police released a "cartoon-type caricature" of the murderer which was "clearly meant to establish his Jewish, east European origins", playing on fears and repressed desires of white masculinity, and serving to articulate gender and sexuality into anti-Semitism, linking notions of "deviant racialised sexuality" and "fallen white femininity" (2002, pp. 18).

Hartmann and Husband's early work also highlighted the function of mass media and local press in constructions of white beliefs and attitudes around immigration debates in the British press in 1971. They identified a "prioritization" of the "immigrant" frame in British news media in relation to coverage of people or communities of "colour", which continued to paint "coloured" immigrants as problematic despite the fact that emigration at the time exceeded immigration by more than 20,000 people. The authors concluded that the media "uncritically reproduced the persistent perception that 'coloured' immigrants were a problem even though the facts did not support such a construction" (Hartmann and Husband, discussed and cited in Gale, 2005, pp. 20-21).

During the OJ Simpson trial, media played a formative role in the "dislocation" of "race" and perpetuation of a normative but hidden whiteness (Fiske, 1996). As John Fiske describes, "Racism is dislocated when it is apparently to be found only in the behaviours of a racial minority and never in those of the white power structure. Dislocating racism thus maintains the racelessness of whiteness" (1996, p. 272). Not dissimilar to the cultural enunciations described earlier, racial "dislocation" refers to purportedly nonracist racism in that it avoids the overt descriptors and characteristics of race, but nevertheless perpetuates

their distinctions. The prominence of racial issues throughout the trial made it difficult for media to avoid commenting on them, however, media coverage focused consistently on the composition and racial configuration of the jury. “Dislocated racism” occurred in that racial issues were exclusively identified with the “Black” side of the case (Fiske, 1996, p. 273).

Similarly, the articles and interviews in this issue all circumnavigate issues of media and whiteness. David Bates examines media’s role in reproducing racialisations in his article “Making The White Folk Angry: The Media, “Race” and Electoral Politics in the United Kingdom in 2010”. Bates contextualises the prominence of discourses of whiteness in relation to the resurgence of parties from the far-right and examines the role of media in promoting an exclusivist “white” identity in immigration debates, arguing that invocations of “race” became a “meaningful category in relation to immigration debates” during the 2010 election.

Clemence Due’s examination of counter-representations of minstrelsy in ““Aussie Humour” Or Racism? *Hey Hey It’s Saturday* and the Denial of Racism in Online Responses to News Media Articles” draws attention to how Aussie humour and its naturalisation as part of the Australian national identity were mobilised to negate claims of racism. She examines this in response to Harry Connick Jr’s accusations of racism after he was asked to judge the *Jackson Jive* skit on the *Hey Hey It’s Saturday* reunion program in 2009. Drawing on van Dijk’s “denials of racism”, her paper provides valuable insights into the way that articulations of Aussie humour were mobilised not only in ways that rebutted claims of racism, but also worked to reinforce particular constructions of the Australian national identity and to shape a view of Australia as a country free from racism.

We also include two interviews with prominent academics in the field of race relations and identity studies. Professor Clarence Walker argues that the discourses of post-raciality surrounding Barack Obama’s election as the first self-identifying black President of the United States, together with discourses of colour-neutrality and colour-blindness, are reactionary discourses constituted in relation to a white-centred historiography that both defines the US history and blackness in relation to a normative whiteness. He argues that the ongoing effacement of race contained within these discourses is exacerbated by the “historical superficiality” of journalism and pop-culture representations. In our second interview, Myria Georgiou shares her own trajectory in researching the intersections between media, diaspora, urban life and identity, including ethnicities and “race”. Georgiou advocates for new media and communication paradigms that, rather than privileging the analytical centrality of the nation-state, with its propensity for reinforcing hierarchical views of the other, instead enable contextualisation of factors such as identity, transnationalism, and everyday experience. Reviewing contemporary work also performs a significant function in graduate scholarly publications like Platform, and we are pleased to publish our inaugural review. Daniel Golding examines the journalistic applicability of videogames in his review of *Newsgames: Journalism at Play* (Ian Bogost, Simon Ferrari and Bobby Schweizer, 2010).

Whether rendered opaque by the patina of cultural preferences and ethnicity or by the imperatives and determinisms of the market and economy, the naturalisation of narratives (and counter-narratives) which emphasise rather than celebrate difference, continues to perpetuate inequities. It remains imperative that research continues to unearth the local and historical specificities in which chameleonic irruptions of “race” and racialisations become visible. The articles in this issue of Platform have taken up this issue by examining contemporaneous examples of the imbricating relationship between media, culture and

political discourse in shaping and contesting normative and hidden discourses such as that of whiteness. We hope that the articles contribute to an understanding of the multifarious forms in which contemporary identities and ethnicisms are not only mediated but also are given "daily flesh" as a basis for working towards greater social parity and equity.

### Endnotes

- 1 Epigraph: Downing and Husband, 2005, p. 25
- 2 Our use of inverted commas denotes "race" as a social construction rather than biologically determined category (see for example Miles, 1993; Barker, 1982)

### References

- Amin, A. (2010). The Reminders of Race. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 27(1), 1.
- Balibar, E. (1991). Is there a neo-racism? In E. Balibar & I. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London; New York: Verso.
- Barker, M. (1982). *The new racism: conservatives and the ideology of the tribe*. Frederick, Maryland: Aletheia Books.
- Bhattacharyya, G., Gabriel, J., & Small, S. (2002). *Race and power: global racism in the twenty-first century*. London: Routledge.
- Castles, S. (1996). The racisms of globalisation. In E. Vasta and S. Castles (Eds.), *The Teeth are Smiling: The persistence of racism in multicultural Australia* (pp. 17-45). St Leonards: Allen and Unwin.
- Downing, J., and Husband, C. (2005). *Representing 'race': racisms, ethnicities and media*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Edge, T. (2010). Southern Strategy 2.0: Conservatives, White Voters, and the Election of Barack Obama. *Journal of Black Studies*, 40(3), 426-444.
- Fiske, J. (1996). *Media Matters: Race and Gender in US Politics*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota.
- Foucault, M. (Ed.). (2003). *Society must be defended: lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*. New York: Picador.
- Gabriel, J. (1997). *Whitewash: racialized politics and the media*. Durham, NC: Routledge.
- Gale, P. (2005). *The Politics of Fear: Lighting the Wik*. Frenchs Forest: Pearson Longman.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2009). *The threat of race: reflections on racial neoliberalism*. Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2002). *The Racial State*. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishers.
- Goldberg, D. T. (1993). *Racist culture: philosophy and the politics of meaning*. Oxford, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Hollinsworth, D. (2007). *Race and racism in Australia*. South Melbourne: Thomson/Social Science Press.
- Lentin, A. (2004). Racial States, Anti-Racist Responses: Picking Holes in 'Culture' and 'Human Rights'. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 7(4), 427-443.
- Lentin, A. (2008). Europe and the Silence about Race. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11(4), 487
- Miles, R. (1993). *Racism after 'race relations'*. London; New York, Routledge.
- Stratton, J. (1998). *Race Daze*. Annandale: Pluto Press.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993). *Elite discourse and racism*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

# MAKING THE WHITE FOLK ANGRY: THE MEDIA, “RACE” AND ELECTORAL POLITICS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 2010

DAVID BATES

UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND, ENGLAND

*Abstract: This article examines the broadcast and press media’s role in promoting a new “xeno-racism” (Fekete, 2001) and the re-emergence of an exclusivist “white” identity which, it is argued, came to the fore in the period leading up to the 2010 general election in the UK. It argues that there is a strong interplay between elements of the popular media and leading politicians which serves to reproduce essentialising and exclusionary discourses underpinned by specific ideas about “race” and nation. The article focuses particularly on the repeated use of the category “white working class” which features heavily in debates around immigration and national security. In doing so, it will attempt to trace the roots of this “hegemonic whiteness” (Hughey, 2010) and locate its position in wider social, political and economic contexts, including the growing racialisation of Muslims, the previous Labour government’s desire to appear “tough” on immigration and its preoccupation with combating extremism and fighting the “War on Terror” (Saeed, 2004; Kundnani, 2007).*

## INTRODUCTION

Electoral politics in the UK in 2009 and 2010 have been marked by a significant shift in support to parties from the right. The European elections in May 2009 saw not only a surge of support for the Conservative Party, but also the election of two far-right British National Party (BNP) candidates as Members of European Parliament (MEPs) and a further 13 MEPs for right-wing populists in the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Then, just 11 months later, 13 years of Labour government came to an end with the arrival in power of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government committed to a programme of deep and rapid public spending cuts. These events have taken place against a background of global economic recession and a soaring domestic budget deficit. However, the economy has

not always been the main focus of political discussion – as ever, “race” and immigration have frequently been at the top of the domestic political agenda.<sup>1</sup>

This paper concerns itself with the media’s role in promoting racialised and exclusionary discourses, marked by and productive of specific ideologies around “race” and “nation”, which have come to dominate public debates on immigration and its significance in contemporary society. It is argued here that leading politicians have all too often appeared to echo the inflammatory rhetoric of the tabloid media in drawing upon a set of racialised discourses which construct the “white working class” and “British culture” as under threat from the dual dangers of immigration and Islamic extremism. This has led to the immigration debate becoming racialised to an extent not seen in many years (Richardson, 2009), with some mainstream politicians now content to overtly play the “race card” to an extent that would have been unthinkable during national elections in the recent past (Vautier, 2009).

The growing racialisation of religion, particularly Islam, has also been evident in this process. The ascendancy of a culture-based racism is seen in the way Muslims increasingly find themselves grouped together homogeneously and subject to suspicion and hostility from journalists and politicians alike. Indeed, Rattansi (2003, no page) comments that this apparent convergence in views between establishment thinking and the ideas of the far-right is one of the most alarming features of contemporary politics. As will be shown, recent academic research on contemporary right-wing extremism by writers such as Copsey (2007) and Rhodes (2009) has noted that the far-right British National Party has recently embraced a “national populist” posture and has benefitted politically from the populist rhetoric espoused by newspapers and mainstream politicians on issues such as immigration and the threat of Islamic terrorism.

This paper begins with a discussion of the ideologies underpinning these discourses, namely “race”, racism and nationalism, and is followed by a more detailed examination of how “white working class” and “national populist” discourses have been deployed by media and politicians during recent elections. This discursive analysis draws upon examples from the broadcast and press media with whom politicians specifically sought to interact, thus illustrating their tendency to mutually reinforce racialised and exclusionary modes of thinking on immigration. As Vautier (2009, p. 127) has commented, case studies of public exchanges between politicians and journalists during election time can illustrate how “commonsense ideas about race, racisms and racial difference are repeated and reworked”. It is often the case, Vautier adds, that an interplay of “commentary and collusion” between media and politicians helps transform “racialised politics into national discursive events” (2009, p. 130).

Rather than focussing on a quantitative content analysis of media and political treatments of immigration and “race” during the elections of 2009 and 2010, it was decided that a critical discourse analysis of mainstream immigration coverage would yield greater insight as to which discourses were at work and how they operated. The contention of this paper is that the discourses identified in the research have worked to shape the immigration debate by establishing an interpretive framework based on the

assumption that immigration is a problem that must be robustly managed or drastically curbed. In doing so, such discourse has not only linked immigration with fears of Islamic extremism and terror, but has also encouraged the idea that Britain's "white" working classes have interests that are separate, distinct and explicitly threatened by immigrants and non-immigrants who are not sufficiently "British" and therefore excluded from membership of the "white working class".

Certain key events during the election in 2010 brought these discourses sharply into focus and provide a good deal of the raw material upon which the research is based. These include the media furore following Gordon Brown's ill-fated meeting with Labour supporter Gillian Duffy on the streets of Rochdale, and Labour MP Phil Woolas' controversial election leaflets in his constituency of Oldham and Saddleworth. Both controversies, particularly the former, proved to be highly significant; Brown's indiscretion was seen by some observers (including members of his own team) as the fatal moment in which Labour effectively "lost the election" (Rawnsley, 2010, pp. 730-33), while Woolas would ultimately be stripped of his place in Parliament by High Court Judges who determined that he had knowingly made false statements about a political opponent in campaign materials. A critical discourse analysis of Brown's statements, and of the dominant media's responses to "Bigot-gate" (as it came to be known), allowed the researcher to identify a number of conceptual and rhetorical themes and ideas which reoccur in the dominant media's treatment of "race" and immigration. These were also evident in the statements of Woolas, his campaign team and in the controversial election leaflets themselves – drafted in language, as the Woolas team later admitted, specifically designed to appeal to "white Sun readers". However, in order to provide a more detailed analysis of these discourses, other examples are drawn upon from media coverage of recent years – not least from the very media outlets (such as the *Sun*) that Woolas and his colleagues sought to impress.

### **"RACE", NATION AND THE POLITICS OF WHITENESS**

In recent years it has become increasingly common to hear repeated references in the media to "British workers" and the "white working class". These discourses have been mobilised particularly during and after local or national elections by politicians, reporters and commentators eager to articulate or explain the discontent felt by sections of the UK electorate. It is notable that these discourses – usually deployed during discussions about immigration and its impact on jobs, housing and public services – both draw upon and reconfigure ideas about "race" and nation that are a longstanding feature of British politics.

The articulation of social, political and economic fears in racial, national or communal terms is certainly no new phenomenon. Hartmann and Husband's seminal study of racism in the mass media in the 1970s highlighted the way in which "race" was constantly invoked by journalists and politicians as part of an explanatory framework for understanding many of the problems facing British society. The symbolism and meaning attached to "coloured" (i.e. non-white) immigration, they argued, led to the formation of "interpretive frameworks" through which people viewed issues like crime, overcrowding and economic decline. The media's influence,

according to Hartmann and Husband, was that it reinforced and reproduced imagery and stereotypes that were “indicative of an underlying perspective in British culture which provides a ready interpretative framework on matters of race and colour” (Hartmann and Husband, 1974, pp. 30-1). This underlying perspective had its roots in a colonial history wherein British relations with non-white “races” across the world were characterised by the domination and exploitation of those “races” for the benefit of the colonial power’s economic advancement. The scholar Oliver Cox (2009) even argues that modern “race relations” effectively began in the late sixteenth century with the first contact between Native American populations and European colonisers in which the former were subjugated by the latter, thus establishing a symbolic “racial” power relationship that would persist for centuries.

The division of the human species into sub-groups according to skin colour, biological descent, typology or other natural features and their subsequent designation as markers of “race” was a highly ideological process that owed much to the prevailing politics and economics of the day (Miles, 1993). It is now widely acknowledged that ideas about which features make up a “race” are historically contingent. There is also widespread agreement that “races” do not exist in any meaningful biological sense (Banton, 1988; Smedley and Smedley, 2005). While most critics agree that “races” are socially constructed categories (Pilkington, 2003), Miles emphasises the ideological nature of the construction, arguing that “race” is the “ideological moment in a process of domination” (1993, p. 46) and analyses of “racialisation” must therefore examine the material interests and power relationships of the groups concerned. Pilkington (2003) illustrates this point by observing that at one time or another groups as diverse as African colonial subjects, Jewish migrants, women and even the “indigenous” working classes were all seen as belonging to different and inferior biological “races” by the materially dominant classes to whom they were subordinate. With this in mind, Hall argues that “race” must be seen not as a biological category but rather as an enduring *discursive* category:

The organising category of those ways of speaking, systems of representation, and social practices (discourses) which utilise a loose, often unspecified set of differences in physical characteristics – skin colour, hair texture, physical and bodily features etc. – as symbolic markers in order to differentiate one group socially from another (1992, p. 298).

This is to acknowledge that what people see as “race” not only changes but can also be ascribed with various meanings at different moments in history. Similarly, Gandy (1998) has commented that it is the production of meaning that is the central aim of discursive and symbolic “racial projects”. To illustrate this he points to the various stages through which “race” as a meaningful analytical category has evolved, from a belief in racial typologies at the height of imperialism to the “Black Power” movement’s struggle for self-definition through “black pride” in the twentieth century (1998, pp. 37-9).

The “racial project” of whiteness has gone through many transformations, of which the “white working class” recently referred to by British politicians and commentators is only the latest permutation. Although “whiteness” as a symbolic value associated with pale skin is an ancient phenomenon, it assumed a distinctively

“racial” and ideological-political character only with the onset of European colonialism in the late fifteenth century, as the degradation and suffering of the slave trade and plantation exploitation came to be seen simply as the result of a natural order in which black “races” were inherently degraded and degenerate (Cox, 2009) and “whiteness” signified progress, prowess and enlightenment. As Dyer (1997) puts it, “white people are neither literally or symbolically white” but have been “coloured” or “raced” as part of a social process which attributes certain qualities to certain visible human features.

Hughey (2010, p. 1292) has written of a “hegemonic whiteness” wherein racial identity for whites not only positions itself as different from (and superior to) non-whites but also marginalises those “practices of being white that fail to exemplify dominant ideals”. It is true, for example, that many groups throughout history that were visibly as “white” as anyone were in fact excluded from the category on the grounds that they failed to meet the necessary criteria of “racial” or national belonging – what Jacobson (1998) refers to as the “probationary whiteness” of the Jewish, Irish, Italian and Greek migrants of the United States, for example. A further case in point is the European migrant workers in the UK who, despite being racially “white”, working class and resident in the UK, are excluded from most definitions of the “white working class” which appear in debates around immigration – precisely because they are seen to represent an alien presence in the UK which threatens the racialised privileges of the authentically British “white working class”.

Indeed, Bonnett (2000) has noted how the British working class, having once been excluded from the “symbolic formation of whiteness”, eventually came to “actively employ this identity as if it was significant – or, indeed, central – to their own sense of self, nation and community” (2000, p. 28). Bonnett argues that it was the development of “populist imperialism” in the late nineteenth century, and the construction of advanced welfare-capitalism in the mid-twentieth century, that led to “whiteness” becoming available to the British working class. Once available, it became cast as “the identity of the ordinary ... a lack of exceptionality, the homely virtues of quietness, tidiness, cleanness and decency” (2000, p. 40). The welfare state, a project designed to maintain harmony in a society ridden by class inequality, was central to this formulation, as it was cited as a source of national pride which cut across the class divide and gave working class people a stake in the “national interest” by maintaining a relatively healthy and affluent population.

This highlights the important relationship between “race” and nation which has been an implicit and explicit presence in debates about immigration in Britain for more than a century. Indeed, although politicians and commentators strenuously claim that immigration and “race” are not linked, “race” and nation in the UK are historically and culturally contiguous. Immigration control in the UK has always been highly selective in its exclusion of certain groups at different times. The earliest example of modern border controls in 1905 have been described as “a thinly disguised means for excluding Jews”, a group who had been “racialised – depicted as criminal, diseased and likely to import moral decay” (Marfleet, 2006, p. 123). A raft of measures to curb immigration from the early 1960s onwards was inspired by a similar desire to exclude non-white migrants from the Commonwealth. In the words of

William Deedes, a minister in the government which presided over the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962: “The Bill’s real purpose was to restrict the influx of coloured immigrants. We were reluctant to say so openly” (1968, p. 10).

Furthermore, several writers have noted the close links between notions of racial or hegemonic “whiteness” and national belonging. The nation was famously described by Benedict Anderson (1991) as an “imagined political community”. Balibar and Wallerstein (1991), meanwhile, have suggested that the existence of a national frontier itself can be seen as a “prior criterion” to the formation of racism, as both “race” and nation involve classification, differentialism and exclusion of groups which are constructed as *Other*. In the case of Britain, with its colonial history and careful cultivation of “whiteness” as a virtue synonymous with imperial domination and national pride, the racialised character of the nation remains intact even in the absence of more overt social racisms of old.

Modood (1992, pp. 5-7), for example, has drawn attention to what he describes as the practically “quasi-ethnic” nature of Britishness in its identification with whiteness, while Anthias and Yuval-Davis maintain that racism in Britain is rooted in a “hegemonic Anglomorphonic ethnicity” which is embodied in the British state and constructs non-white, non-Christian minorities as only “partial members of the British national collectivity” (1992, pp. 55-9). Journalists at the *Daily Mail* newspaper revealed that such thinking persists when they complained in February 2009 that the Government would “fail to record the true impact of immigration because they [the Office for National Statistics] record their children as British rather than second or third generation immigrants” (Hundal, 2009). People from second or third generation migratory backgrounds were therefore rendered “un-British” and rhetorically excluded from membership of the national collectivity. As Sanz Sabido (2009) points out, this labelling of certain groups of British citizens as “foreign” must be examined as part of a wider process with links to issues around national security, globalisation and the “War on Terror”.

### **RACISM, XENO-RACISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA**

Given that what constitutes “race” is determined largely by historical and material conditions, it follows that racism cannot be a fixed, rigid concept but rather one that evolves and multiplies in and across various settings. Furthermore, Miles (1993) contends that because “race” is an ideologically constructed category, it is the process of “racialisation” that merits study, for it is that which produces racisms by dividing human beings into separate groupings which are held to be essentially and irreconcilably different. Similarly, Todorov (2009) argues that although “modern racialism” focuses more on culture than biology, the “rigidity of the determinism” remains the same. It is more appropriate, then, to speak of “racisms” – or, for critics like Miles who stress the ideological nature of the process, “different modalities of racism within the historical matrix mapped by the evolution of the capitalist mode of production and by the associated rise of the nation state” (Miles, 1993, p. 21). Racism assumes different forms in different social, political and historical contexts, and certain groups may be “racialised” (e.g. the Irish) differently in one historical moment

from the next. As Balibar points out, racisms are “ever active formations” which can materialise in different guises in different places and times (Balibar, 1991, p. 40).

A genuine understanding of the anti-immigrant racism popularised in mass media debates around immigration in the 2000s demands an examination of the wider historical context in which those debates have taken place and some consideration of the changing nature of racism in Britain. In the later decades of the twentieth century, classic racisms associated with differentiation by “racial” biology were largely superseded by racisms which drew upon notions of culture and ethnicity as the basis of separateness (Barker, 1981; Hall, 1992). Gilroy (1987), for example, observed that in post-war Britain discourses of patriotism and nationalism became part of a new racism concerned primarily with mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, whereby non-white law-breaking was seen as proof of the cultural incompatibility of non-whites with “Britishness” (see also Hall et al., 1978). Whilst hostility towards newly arrived migrants in the UK was by no means unprecedented (Fryer, 1984; Spencer, 1997), hostility towards settled migrant groups (and their descendents) and new arrivals now focused on their “alien” culture which was said to pose a threat to “British values” and the national way of life. As Barker explained: “You do not need to think of yourself as superior – you do not even have to dislike or blame those who are so different from you – in order to say that the presence of these aliens constitutes a threat to our way of life” (1981, p. 18).

One form of racism that has drawn heavily on these culturalist discourses is that which has arisen from the racialisation of Islam and Muslims, a process that has long been observed by anti-racist critics and campaigners. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992, p.55), for example, have highlighted the extent to which the relationship between religion and the state in Britain has led to an assumed correlation between religious and national identity, and that “the exclusion of minority religious groups from the national collectivity has started a process of racialisation that especially relates to Muslims”. As Saeed (2004, p. 72) points out, traditional stereotypes which highlighted the supposed “passivity” of British Asians – that is, first and second generation migrants to the UK from countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh – has been superseded by “a more militant aggressive identity which is meant to be further at odds with ‘British secular society’”. This new stereotype has focussed specifically on people’s Muslim identity. In spite of their significant national, ethnic and linguistic diversity, Muslims in Britain and worldwide are increasingly seen as a homogenous group which has “common origins, a shared culture and monolithic identity” (Kundnani 2007, p. 126). As social geographer Ceri Peach (2006, p. 631) puts it: “The events of 11 September, 2001 in the United States, the Iraq war of 2003, the Madrid bombs of 11 March 2004, the London bombings of 7 July 2005, the riots in the *banlieus* of Paris in January 2006 and the continuing Middle East crises, magnified an already focused attention on the Muslim population of Britain.”

Minority communities in the UK traditionally described in “ethnic” or national terms (or simply under the heading of “Asian”) are now seen primarily as “Muslims”, a single community that has been castigated for its alleged separatism, insularity and unwillingness to integrate into mainstream society and reluctance to adopt “British” values (Kundnani, 2007). Drawing upon Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilisations” thesis (1996), many of these critics claim that Islam poses a threat to Western culture, leading to a situation where Muslims’ allegiance to Britain and “the West” is increasingly placed under question (Saeed, 2004). Huntington’s thesis, which posits a stark divide between the politics and values of the West and the Islamic world, has been critiqued by Halliday (1995) and Said (2003) not least for its essentialising view of cultures and its positing of a false binary. As they have pointed out, Huntington’s analysis overlooks not only the diversity and heterogeneity of Islam but also the considerable social, cultural, political and economic ties between the “Islamic world” and “the West”. Nevertheless, this fossilisation of cultural difference as a pretext for the stigmatisation and marginalisation of certain social groups bears all the hallmarks of the “pseudo-biological culturalism” Barker identified as the “new racism”. As Saeed (2004) comments, Muslims in Britain have come to be seen as a kind of “enemy within” in a process of racialisation often referred to as “Islamophobia” (Runnymede Trust, 1997; Greater London Authority, 2007) or “anti-Muslim racism” (Halliday, 1995).

This racialisation of groups with a shared religious identity exemplifies the shift towards a racism which focuses on culture rather than biology and in which the target group’s skin colour or physical appearance is ostensibly no longer important. For example, Greenslade (2005) has noted that since the term “asylum seeker” is seemingly “racially impartial” it has become possible for journalists and politicians to use inflammatory language against asylum seekers that would no longer be seen as acceptable against groups which are considered “racial” or “ethnic” in a classic sense. Quoting Ambalavaner Sivanandan, Fekete has argued that the racism employed against Muslims, refugees and Eastern European migrant workers in modern Britain since the turn of the twenty-first century can thus be described as a form of “xeno-racism”:

It is a racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a ‘natural’ fear of strangers. But in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them, it is a xenophobia that bears all the hallmarks of the old racism. It is racism in substance, but ‘xeno’ in form. It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism (Fekete 2001, p. 24).

Indeed, many of the classic tenets of racism directed towards past groups of migrants – from Irish workers in the nineteenth century, to Jews in the early twentieth century, and West Indians in the early post-war era – can clearly be seen in action today, with East European migrant workers, asylum seekers and British Muslims being the latest in a long line of groups to be accused of taking jobs, draining the country’s resources and posing a threat to its security and identity with their “alien” values and “un-British” behaviour (Kundnani, 2007). Although hostility towards European migrant workers is ostensibly colour-blind, it nevertheless draws upon many of the same essentialising and exclusionary discourses that have been used to

stigmatise earlier groups of migrants. “Collectivising features”, Balibar argues, “will be set up as stigmata for exteriority and impurity, whether these relate to style of life, beliefs or ethnic origins” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, p. 60). This can certainly be seen in press coverage of migrant workers in the UK in recent years. Seen less as human beings or migrant workers than simply as “Poles”, “Italians” or generic “immigrants”, their alien character and “Otherness” has constantly been invoked by a tabloid media quick to stigmatise them as “feckless”, dishonest or greedy (Slack, 2006a) – all accusations noteworthy for being levelled against earlier generations of migrants.

Nevertheless, Sivanandan’s assertion that this form of racism “cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well” must be questioned. Although new forms of racism have tended to focus primarily on culture rather than colour, debates around immigration and security in modern Britain have increasingly drawn upon discourses which invoke the concerns of a “white working class” which explicitly brings skin colour back into the fray. This brings to mind Vautier’s comment that “white anxieties” over threats to “white privilege” provoked by immigration refer “not to whiteness in a literal sense, or to a homogenous community” but to “an ideal of national and dominant belonging” which may exclude migrants who actually see themselves as “white” but who are nevertheless deemed to be “ethnically different” and therefore excluded from membership of the “white” nation (2009, p. 123). European migrants in the UK currently find themselves in this position. Despite being white and working class, they are victims of a racism which sees them as being not “British” enough to be truly “white” and are therefore excluded from membership of the “white working class” like Irish and Jewish migrants before them. It is therefore clear that the “xeno-racism” of which Sivanandan speaks – which indeed “bears all the hallmarks of the old racism” in the way it “denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them” – needs to be examined in the context of a “hegemonic whiteness” (Hughey, 2010) which conflates “white” with “British” and actively excludes other Europeans from the ideal of “white” national belonging it has constructed.

#### **MAKING THE WHITE FOLK ANGRY: LABOUR, THE MEDIA AND THE “WHITE WORKING CLASS”**

The following section of the article examines how issues of “race” and immigration surfaced in the 2010 UK general election through the prominence of discourses which invoked the “white working class” as a meaningful analytical category, and traces the development of this discourse in electoral debates around immigration and security in recent years. As Richardson (2009, p. 358) recently commented: “Issues relating to immigration, asylum, and cultural, religious and ‘racial’ difference are prominent in British domestic politics to a degree not seen for over twenty years.” During the 2005 election, Richardson observes, these themes dominated newspaper reports more than any other issue. Although no quantitative analysis has yet emerged on the frequency of these themes in the 2010 election, there can be little doubt that they played a prominent role.

The “white working class” and its particular relevance to the issue of immigration became a topic of national importance in the general election of 2010 thanks largely to the intervention of a voter in Rochdale whose altercation with canvassing Prime Minister Gordon Brown was broadcast live on television and quickly came to dominate news agendas. On the morning of 28 April 2010 the Prime Minister was on an election walkabout in Rochdale, Greater Manchester, surrounded by the usual gaggle of journalists, photographers and camera crews, when he stopped to chat in the street with local woman Gillian Duffy, 65. Duffy briefly raised a number of issues with Brown including tax, pensions, the budget deficit, benefits, immigration and university tuition fees. In a short exchange, Mrs Duffy appeared to link the issue of unfair welfare distribution with mass migration from Eastern Europe:

Duffy: But there’s too many people now who aren’t vulnerable but they can claim and people who are vulnerable can’t get claim, can’t get it.

Brown: But they shouldn’t be doing that. There’s no life on the dole for people any more. If you’re unemployed you’ve got to go back to work. It’s six months...

Duffy: You can’t say anything about the immigrants because you’re saying that you’re... all these Eastern Europeans what are coming in, where are they flocking from? (*BBC News*, 28 April 2010, no page)

Brown and Duffy ended the conversation cordially before Brown climbed into his car and departed. Unwittingly recorded by an active *Sky News* microphone, the Prime Minister complained to aides inside the car: “*That was a disaster. Should never have put me with that woman ... whose idea was that?*” When asked what the woman had said, Brown replied: “*Ugh, everything – she’s just a sort of bigoted woman, said she used to be Labour. It’s just ridiculous.*” Brown’s remarks were almost immediately picked up by *Sky News* and broadcast continually for the remainder of the day. By the time Brown appeared on a BBC radio interview just one hour later, the tape was relayed to him for the first time. Although subsequent interviews with Duffy suggested that she did not automatically equate the “bigot” accusations specifically with her comments on immigration, Brown admitted to interviewer Jeremy Vine: “The problem was that I was dealing with a question that she raised about immigration and I wasn’t given a chance to answer it because we had a whole melee of press around us ... It was a question about immigration that really I think was annoying” (*BBC News*, 28 April, n.p.).

This episode was interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, the media’s role in elevating the issue of immigration to the top of the political agenda was undeniably important, and reaffirms Vautier’s point that national discursive events are often produced through an interplay between politicians and journalists. *Sky News*’ editorial decision to broadcast Brown’s off-camera remarks had significant political consequences and forced Brown into a humiliating climb-down. It set the news agenda for at least the rest of the week and provided rival parties with valuable political capital. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity for journalists and political rivals to focus on one issue among the many that were mentioned by Duffy – namely immigration – and to frame the issue within the racialised discourse of the “white working class”. Immigration subsequently became the only topic to be covered in two

of the three televised leadership debates between the main party leaders, as Brown was forced to acknowledge his mistake in the debate which followed the incident little more than twenty-four hours later.

The BBC's political editor Nick Robinson commented that the incident "catapults the issue of immigration to the top of the political agenda" (Robinson, 2010, no page). Robinson then attempted to contextualise the mood of popular dissatisfaction with the economy and immigration by articulating a discourse that placed "race" at the centre of the issue: "The leader of the Labour Party has insulted one of the very type of voter it's so vital for his party to hang on to – older, white and traditionally Labour." Robinson's invocation of the "white working class" was indicative of a wider linking of immigration with "race" in a discourse of "whiteness" that had become prominent in electoral debates around immigration in preceding years. Here, "white" not only signified that someone was British and working class but also that they were hostile to immigration – and that it was in their interests that immigration be curtailed or halted.

The tendency of politicians and commentators to draw upon a discourse of whiteness to discuss immigration has often been linked to the growing electoral success of the far-right British National Party. It has been noted that far-right groups such as the BNP perform well when they are able to seize upon the legitimate concerns of working and lower middle class voters on issues such as the availability and quality of jobs, housing and local services (John et al., 2006). In the aftermath of the nationwide local elections in 2008, anti-fascist commentator Nick Lowles of *Searchlight* magazine observed that the BNP was emerging as the voice of the "forgotten working class". The results of a study conducted by YouGov a year later in June 2009 discovered that the majority of BNP voters were male, manual workers with an annual income slightly lower than the national median. While 40 per cent of the public as a whole thought that white people suffered unfair discrimination, the figure reached 77 per cent among BNP voters (YouGov, 2009). As Lowles concluded a year earlier: "The BNP provides far more than a racist scapegoat. It gives some voters a sense of belonging, an articulation of their own frustration – even a new white identity" (2008, p. 5).

The discourse of whiteness that the BNP simultaneously exploited and promoted gained growing currency in the media and among leading politicians, who rather than challenging discourses of white privilege and white anxiety, in some cases appeared to endorse them. In April 2006, for example, government minister Margaret Hodge claimed that "eight out of ten" voters in her Barking constituency had indicated their willingness to vote BNP in local elections (The Telegraph, 16 April 2006, no page). Despite ostensibly distancing themselves from the "odious BNP" both Hodge and the *Daily Mail* appeared to endorse the far-right party's interpretative framework on the alleged problems caused by immigration. The paper's editorial quoted Hodge articulating the fears of her constituents who had vowed to vote for the BNP: "They can't get a home for their children, they see black and ethnic minority communities moving in and they are angry" (Daily Mail, 17 April 2006, no page). The *Mail* reinforced Hodge's sentiments on behalf of the working class, its editorial opining: "It is they ... who feel the real impact of uncontrolled immigration, who

believe they are being pushed down the queue for social housing, healthcare and welfare benefits by newcomers.” Nowhere did the *Mail* (or Hodge) attempt to refute such myths or present alternative explanations for the problems cited.

However, such invocations were not always in response to the threat of the BNP. In early 2009, a *Sun* headline declared “White Working Class Ignored”, with supporting quotes from Labour’s Communities Secretary Hazel Blears: “White working-class people living on estates sometimes just don’t feel anyone is listening or speaking up for them” (Hartley, 2009, no page). One week after Gordon Brown’s encounter with Gillian Duffy, the *Daily Mail*’s Harriet Sergeant claimed that “the immigration crisis has nothing to do with class, colour or religious background” (Sergeant, 2010, no page). Yet she ended the piece with this sombre second-hand account of a visit to a primary school in East London:

On the wall hung school photos, past and present. There was one glaring difference. All the children 50 years ago were white. All the children in the recent photo were not. Where had the descendants of those white children gone, I wondered? In another country, one would presume some terrible ethnic cleansing had taken place. In the UK, it goes by another name – multiculturalism (Sergeant, 2010, n.p.).

This comparison between ethnic cleansing and multiculturalism returns “race” firmly to the centre of the “crisis” over immigration which had originated in Gillian Duffy’s comments on Eastern European migrant workers. Furthermore, it is uncomfortably reminiscent of the BNP’s frequently stated claims that multiculturalism constitutes a form of genocide or “ethnocide” (Copsey, 2007) against the “indigenous” British people.

Elsewhere during the 2010 general election campaign, similar racialised discourses were at work in Oldham East and Saddleworth. There, Immigration Minister Phil Woolas distributed a number of election leaflets and newspapers targeting rival Liberal Democrat candidate Elwyn Watkins for being “soft” on immigration, crime, terrorism and Islamic extremism.<sup>2</sup> In one leaflet it was claimed that an extremist group had endorsed the Liberal Democrat candidate and that the Liberal Democrats had failed to reject their endorsement – “*maybe because the Liberal Democrats are giving amnesty to thousands of illegal immigrants*”.<sup>3</sup> Thus the leaflet made an explicit link between Islamic extremism and immigration, and reminded its readers: “*Immigration Minister is a demanding job in which Phil’s tough stance has been widely praised. The Sun newspaper said ‘we applaud both his vision and his bottle’.*”

Once again the interplay between media and politicians in the reproduction of exclusionary, essentialising discourses was clearly visible. Woolas’ leaflets used images and rhetoric which mirrored the most virulent anti-Muslim stereotyping seen in British tabloids in recent years. As Poole (2006) has shown, in the wake of the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, much media reporting of Muslims has focussed on the themes of deviance, cultural difference and threats to security. When Woolas announced in 2006 that a Muslim teacher in Dewsbury should be sacked for refusing to remove her veil, the *Sun*’s Jon Gaunt endorsed his position with enthusiasm: “It’s

great that Race Minister Phil Woolas has finally discovered a backbone and told the Dewsbury Dalek that she either lifts the veil or picks up her P45 [employee departure form].” He added: “The problem lies with your community and their failure to integrate, not with the majority population” (Gaunt, 2006, no page). Gaunt’s description of Woolas as “Race Minister” rather than “Immigration Minister” is highly revealing of the conflation between “race”, culture and migration which exists in much media reporting. Nevertheless, this was followed by another controversial intervention by Woolas in 2008 when he told a conference audience that the immigration debate should be framed in terms of reference set by the *Sun* and praised the newspaper’s readers for their understanding of the issues (Wheeler, 2008).

Of particular note is the fact that Woolas retained the seat by a slender margin of 103 votes, only for the result to be legally challenged by his Liberal Democrat opponent on the grounds that Labour’s leaflets were alleged to have made a number of false statements about Watkins, including that he had taken “illegal” foreign donations. In the ensuing Parliamentary court case, it was heard how Woolas’ election team had intended to “make the white folk angry” and “galvanise the white *Sun* vote” in Labour’s favour (*Manchester Evening News*, 13 September 2010) for fear of losing this most marginal of seats. This only served to demonstrate once more the centrality of racialised politics in media and political discourses during and after the election. The dichotomy between “white *Sun* readers” and Islamic extremists echoed the essentialising discourse of Huntington’s “clash of civilisations” thesis in the way it made no account of the many social, cultural and political overlaps between white, working class and Muslim voters in Oldham and Saddleworth. It was evident, however, that the somewhat rigid category of the “white working class” had gained considerable political currency.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to illustrate the media’s role in promoting racialised and exclusionary discourses in debates around immigration in contemporary British politics. Having focussed on the prominence of discourses of whiteness and their place in discussions about immigration and national security, a number of points can be drawn in conclusion. Firstly, it can be seen that despite pleas to the contrary (see Slack, 2006b, for example) the immigration debate has become explicitly racialised to an extent not seen in decades. Whereas mainstream politicians in the run-up to the 1997 general election disavowed playing the “race card” in an overt sense (Vautier, 2009), their counterparts in 2010 openly drew upon discourses that invoked “race” as a meaningful category appropriate for discussing immigration.

Secondly, it can be argued that such discourses of whiteness are marked by and productive of ideologies around “race” and nation that are rooted in the changing social, political and cultural contexts in which they appear, although the conflation of whiteness with Britishness, and the exclusion of certain groups from membership of the national collectivity, is a recurring theme in British history. The essentialisation of Muslim identity, for example, together with its constant invocation as a potential threat to British values and the security of the “white working class”, owes much to the broader context in which support for a “War on Terror” has been pursued by

successive British governments. The exclusion of white working class migrants from dominant definitions of the “white working class”, meanwhile, has taken place against a background of European Union enlargement and population movement followed by the onset of a global economic recession and rising domestic unemployment.

Finally, the mutually reinforcing relationship between elements of the popular press, the broadcast media and leading politicians is evident in the “interplay of commentary and collusion that helps turn racialised politics into national discursive events” (Vautier, 2009, p. 130), as highlighted particularly during the 2010 general election. In this respect, it is perhaps telling that Immigration Minister Phil Woolas endorsed the *Sun* newspaper’s coverage of immigration (which has been widely criticised for its tone and accuracy – see Greenslade, 2005; Article 19, 2003) and then sought to emulate some of its most inflammatory rhetoric against Muslims in an attempt to appeal to “white *Sun* readers”. The popular media and mainstream politicians like Woolas have played a dual role in maintaining a consensus long ago identified by Hartmann and Husband (1974) in which immigration is seen largely as a problem afflicting modern Britain.

Whilst it is far from clear whether the predominance of these racialised discourses can be overturned, there is certainly evidence that subordinate discourses can challenge and undermine their exclusionary logic on a limited scale. As Sanz Sabido (2009, p. 79) comments: “Mediated discourses need to provide the audience with objective information about political debates and disputes, and move away from generating and supporting division and the idea of ‘clashing civilisations’.” Garapich (2008), for example, has noted the emergence of an independent migrant media as a factor in the successful integration of Polish migrants into the British workforce. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that workers themselves, host and migrant alike, have been known to organise collectively across national and “racial” divides in order to challenge exclusionary discourses, as during the industrial disputes in the energy sector in 2009 in response to nationalistic demands for “British jobs for British workers” at picket lines across the UK (see Solidarity, 2009, no page). Meanwhile, charities working with refugees have reported that organisations such as Presswise/Mediawise, the National Union of Journalists, smaller circulation newspapers like the *Independent* and regional newspapers have all played a positive role in attempting to provide a more balanced discussion of immigration (JCHR, 2007, pp. 98-107).

The racialisation of the immigration debate, it seems, has been significant but not total. It is, perhaps, a struggle over the terms of debate in which subordinate forces will continue to compete, winning small victories along the way.

#### ENDNOTES

1. “Race” appears in inverted commas throughout this article in acknowledgement of the fact that the concept has no basis in biology and is socially constructed. See Miles (1993).

2. Each of these can be viewed at <http://www.electionleaflets.org/>, retrieved October 10, 2010.
3. See <http://www.electionleaflets.org/leaflets/6105/>, retrieved October 10, 2010.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anthias, F. & Yuval-Davis, A. (1992). *Racialised Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-racist Struggle*. London: Routledge.
- Article 19 (2003) *What's the Story? Results from Research Into Media Coverage of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK*. London: Article 19.
- Balibar, E. (1991). Racism and Nationalism. In E. Balibar & I. Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (pp. 37-68). London: Verso.
- Balibar, E. & Wallerstein, I. (1991). *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London: Verso.
- Banton, M. (1988). *Racial Consciousness*. London: Longman.
- Barker, M. (1981). *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe*. London: Junction Books.
- BBC News (2010, 28 April). How Gordon Brown "bigot" Jibe Row Unfolded. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/election\\_2010/8649448.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/election_2010/8649448.stm)
- Bonnett, A. (2000). *White Identities: Historical and International Perspectives*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Copsey, N. (2007). Changing Course or Changing Clothes? Reflections on the Ideological Evolution of the British National Party 1999-2006. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 41(1), 61-82.
- Cox, O. (2009). Race Relations: Its Meaning, Beginning, and Progress. In L. Back & J. Solomos (Eds.), *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 71-78). London: Routledge.
- Daily Mail (2006, 17 April). Paying the price for immigration lies. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-383282/Paying-price-immigration-lies.html>
- Deedes, W. (1968). *Race Without Rancour*. London: Conservative Political Centre.
- Dyer, R. (1997). *White*. London: Routledge.
- Fekete, L. (2001). The Emergence of Xeno-Racism. *Race and Class*, 43(2), 23-40.
- Fryer, P. (1984). *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*. London: Pluto.
- Gandy, O. H. (1998). *Communication and Race: A Structural Perspective*. London: Arnold.
- Garapich, M.P. (2008). The Migration Industry and Civil Society: Polish Immigrants in the United Kingdom Before and After EU Enlargement. *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34(5), 735-752.
- Gaunt, J. (2006, 17 October). Why These "Leaders" are a Pain in the Burkas, *The Sun*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from

- <http://www.islamophobia-watch.com/islamophobia-watch/2006/10/17/why-these-leaders-are-a-pain-in-the-burkas.html>
- Gilroy, P. (1987). *There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack*. London: Routledge.
- Greater London Authority (2007). *The Search for Common Ground: Muslims, Non-Muslims and the UK media*. London: GLA.
- Greenslade, R. (2005). *Seeking Scapegoats: The Coverage of Asylum in the UK Press*. London: IPPR.
- Hall, S. (1992). The Question of Cultural Identity. In S. Hall, D. Held & A. McGrew (Eds.), *Modernity and its Futures* (pp. 273-326). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press/Open University.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. & Roberts B. (1978). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan.
- Halliday, F. (1995). *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. London: IB Tauris.
- Hartley, C. (2009, 02 January). White Working Class Ignored, *The Sun*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article2089249.ece>
- Hartmann, P. & Husband, C. (1974). *Racism and the Mass Media*. London: Davis-Poynter.
- Hughey, M.W. (2010). The (Dis)similarities of White Racial Identities: The Conceptual Framework of “Hegemonic Whiteness”. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(8), 1289-1309.
- Hundal, S. (2009, 27 February). Apparently I’m not British, *The Guardian*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/feb/26/daily-mail-immigration-britain>
- Huntington, S.P. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Jacobson, M.F. (1998). *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- John, P., Margetts, H., Rowland, D. & Weir, S. (2006). *The BNP: The Roots of its Appeal*. Colchester: Democratic Audit.
- Joint Committee on Human Rights, UK Parliament (2007). *The Treatment of Asylum Seekers: Tenth Report of Session 2006–07*. London: The Stationary Office.
- Kundnani, A. (2007). *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st century Britain*. London: Pluto.
- Lowles, N. (2008). Where Now?. *International Searchlight*, 396, June.
- Manchester Evening News* (2010, 13 September). MP Phil Woolas Sought to “Make White Folk Angry” in Election Campaign. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from [http://menmedia.co.uk/manchestereveningnews/news/politics/s/1322165\\_mp\\_phi\\_l\\_woolas\\_sought\\_to\\_make\\_white\\_folk\\_angry\\_in\\_election\\_campaign](http://menmedia.co.uk/manchestereveningnews/news/politics/s/1322165_mp_phi_l_woolas_sought_to_make_white_folk_angry_in_election_campaign)
- Marfleet, P. (2006). *Refugees in A Global Era*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Miles, R. (1993). *Racism After “Race Relations”*. London: Routledge.
- Peach, C. (2006). Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and Economic Disadvantage. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(4), 629-654.
- Pilkington, A. (2003). *Racial Disadvantage and Ethnic Diversity in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

- Poole, E. (2006). The Effects of September 11th and the War in Iraq on British Newspaper Coverage. In E. Poole & J. Richardson (Eds.) (2006), *Muslims in the News Media* (pp. 89-102). London: IB Tauris.
- Rattansi, A. (2003, 28 May). Migration Fantasies: How Not to Debate Immigration and Asylum, *Open Democracy*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from [http://www.opendemocracy.net/people-migrationeurope/article\\_1254.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/people-migrationeurope/article_1254.jsp)
- Rawnsley, A. (2010). *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour*. London: Penguin.
- Rhodes, J. (2009). The Banal National Party: The Routine Nature of Legitimacy. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43(2), 142-160.
- Richardson, J. (2009). "Get Shot of the Lot of Them": Election Reporting of Muslims in British Newspapers. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43(3-4).
- Robinson, N. (2010, 28 April). That was a Disaster *BBC News*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from [http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/nickrobinson/2010/04/that\\_was\\_a\\_disa.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/nickrobinson/2010/04/that_was_a_disa.html)
- Runnymede Trust (1997). *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All. Report of the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia*. London: Runnymede Trust.
- Saeed, A. (2004). 9/11 and British Muslims. In J. Carter, & D. Morland (Eds.) (2004) *Anti-Capitalist Britain*. London: New Clarion Press.
- Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- Sanz Sabido, R.M. (2009). When the "Other" Becomes "Us": Mediated Representations, "Terrorism" and the "War on Terror". *PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication*, 1(1), 67-82.
- Sergeant, H. (2010, 02 May). The Great Disconnect, *Daily Mail*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/election/article-1270169/General-Election-2010-The-great-disconnect-Schools-hospitals-jobs-worrying-real-Britons-politicians-wont-admit-problem.html>
- Slack, J. (2006a, 07 November). Britain is the Country of Choice for Many "Feckless" Poles, *Daily Mail*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-415147/Britain-country-choice-feckless-Poles.html>
- (2006b, 06 August). Reid: Talking About Immigration is not Racist, *Daily Mail*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-399334/Reid-Talking-immigration-racist.html>
- Smedley, A. & Smedley, B. (2005). Race as Biology is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem is Real: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Social Construction of Race. *American Psychologist*, 60(1), 16-26.
- Solidarity* (2009, 03 February). Lindsey Oil Refinery Workers' New Demands; and Italian Unions on the Dispute. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2009/02/03/lindsey-oil-refinery-workers-new-demands-and-italian-unions-dispute>
- Spencer, I. (1997). *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain*. London: Routledge.
- The Telegraph (2006, 16 April). Labour is to blame for the drift to the BNP. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/3624365/Labour-is-to-blame-for-the-drift-to-the-BNP.html>

- Todorov, T. (2009). Race and Racism. In L. Back & J. Solomos (Eds.), *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 64-70). London: Routledge.
- Vautier, E. (2009). Playing the “Race Card”: White Anxieties and the Expression and Repression of Popular Racisms in the 1997 General Election. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43(2),122-141.
- Wheeler, B. (2008, 28 October). Woolas “Looking to Sun Readers”, *BBC News*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7696019.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7696019.stm)
- YouGov (2009). *European Elections*. Retrieved 10 October, 2010 from [http://www.channel4.com/news/media/2009/06/day08/yougovpoll\\_080609.pdf](http://www.channel4.com/news/media/2009/06/day08/yougovpoll_080609.pdf)

# POST-RACIALITY OR A RE-IMAGINING OF WHITENESS? AN INTERVIEW WITH CLARENCE E. WALKER

SANDY WATSON  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

## INTRODUCTION

Clarence Walker is recognised as one of the leading historians of American race relations, and is noted for his advocacy of critical historical analysis of race relations and discourses as a way of understanding the present. Walker has written widely on issues relating to black American history, including five books covering variously race and politics (2009), race and the national imaginary (2010); Afrocentrism and discourses of black Africanism (2001, 1999) and the history of nineteenth century black religion (1982).

Walker's most recent work, with Gregory Smithers, explores the emergence of discourses of post-raciality during the 2008 United States election campaign (Walker and Smithers 2009) where Walker argued that the historical superficiality of journalism exacerbates racial tensions rather than creating greater cultural understanding on racial issues (2009, p. 39). In this interview, he discusses the applicability of what he describes as reactionary discourses (that of post-raciality, colour blindness and colour neutrality) in the context of shifting media usage and tensions arising from perceived challenges to the dominant, white-centred national imaginary.

The critique of white-centred accounts of history has been central to Walker's work, and was the subject of his compelling book *Mongrel Nation* (2010), in which he argues for the need to recognise the interracial founding of the United States. The book contextualises the controversy surrounding 1990s claims that Thomas Jefferson, one of America's Founding Fathers, had one or more children in an interracial relationship with a slave girl called Sally Heming. These accounts were refuted heatedly by segments of academia who pointed to Jefferson's documented concern about the dangers of amalgamation as an indication of the unlikely nature of his having an interracial affair. Walker argues persuasively and with historical force that such refutations need to be contextualised as reactionary discourses within a history of white-centred historicising and imagining of national identity in the United States.

Walker is also known for his sustained criticism of ahistorical analysis, perhaps most notably in relation to Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity views Africa (and Egypt) as the source of Western culture rather than Ancient Greece and seeks development of a positive African-centred history (2009; 2001). As Walker argues, it promulgates an essentialist Africanness that smoothes out differences past and present and neglects to contextualise historical and local conditions such as colonialism, slavery, subjugation and cultural diffusion and appropriation (2001, pp. 44-46). In doing so, he argues that not only is it essentialising and racialising, drawing on European eighteenth century notions of race, but also erases the history of agency of black people in the United States (and elsewhere).

Walker grew up in West Berkeley, California. He received his PhD in nineteenth century American history and race relations at the University of California, Berkeley (1976). In 1973 he was appointed lecturer in American History and American Studies at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, where he lectured on American Studies, History, and Southern Gothic Film. Currently, Walker is Professor of History at the University of California, Davis, a position he has held since 1985. He lectures predominately on Black American History, focusing on the period from 1450 to the present. He also teaches nineteenth century Social and Political History of the United States, and the History of Sexuality, Film and Popular Culture. As well as numerous articles and books, Walker was also academic advisor to the PBS American Experience television series (*Reconstruction: The Second Civil War*, 2004). In this interview, he discusses further the relationship between the history of race relations and contemporary discourses of post-raciality in media and political debates.

**PLATFORM:** Throughout your career you have consistently emphasised the need for critical appraisal of historical interracial relations as a basis for understanding the present. When did you first become interested in issues of race and race relations, and how has this interest developed throughout your career?

**Clarence Walker:** Before I went to graduate school in 1967 I grew up in the working-class neighbourhood of West Berkeley. This was America in the 1940s and my family was the first black family to buy a home in the neighbourhood. The kids that I played with from the very beginning were Asian, Caucasian, black, and in some cases Mexican. From early on my education was integrated, and I was very much interested in issues of race and racial differences from about nine years of age. This interest certainly grew apace when I went to junior high, high school and college. But my professional interest developed when I entered the Berkeley graduate program in American history and focused on the History of Black People and American Race Relations. In the 1960s as a result of the Civil Rights Movement we barely spoke about relations with other groups such as Asians and Mexicans, all of the discussion was about black and white people. I felt that that was quite deficient and that one had to broaden one's purview to understand the nature of race in America. Particularly given that this country is a colonial settler society in which race and sexuality were important components in development of the national identity. Our history was not to be understood through master narratives constructed by white people which effaced

America's racialised subjects. The history of white Americans can only be understood as growing out of contact with people of colour, be these Native Americans, African slaves, or Mexicans, for example.

**PLATFORM: The idea that American society is post-racial gained renewed ascendancy with Barack Obama's election as the first (self-identifying) black President of the United States. However, narratives of post-race have been circulating in the US since the Civil Rights Act (1964). Can you elaborate on the nuances between narratives such as post-raciality, colour-blindness and race neutrality as a basis for informing analysis of their presence in political and media debates over the past two years?**

**CW:** In my view these are all reactionary movements. They are constructed around an attempt to efface race as a site of conflict in the American past and present. To say that one is colour-blind rather than colour-conscious is to say that you see something in someone that you don't want to see, that is their colour. It's also to say that you think that these issues are somewhat superficial and that if we want to wish them away we can. You can see this in the whole construction of Asians as some kind of model minority here because they're successful academically and economically, at least in some sectors of the population. You can also see it in the hysteria over immigration with the arrival of large numbers of Spanish-speaking people over recent years.

It is the case in America that most white people do not want to talk about race. They prefer to think that the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has effaced the racial problem, and that if there is a racial problem here it is because black people are basically angry or have refused to accept this new reality in which race is no longer a problem. But if race is no longer a problem, then why are there so many young black men between the ages of 18 and 25 including Mexicans also in American prisons? They constitute approximately one and a half million of two million people in American prisons.

Yet the Obama election was *very much* a racial election, despite these discourses of post-raciality. It was racial in the sense that it required white people to overcome their historical animosity towards the idea of a successful black candidate. I tend to think that up until the leaking to the media of the sermons of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright<sup>1</sup>, as Gregory Smithers and I discuss in *The Preacher and the Politician*, there was little attention to the fact on the part of many white Americans that Barack Obama was black. In the case of black Americans there was great suspicion of him because he was not associated with the two historically defining moments of black American history, one being of course the question of slavery and Jim Crow<sup>2</sup>, the other being the Civil Rights Movement. It was only when Jeremiah Wright's comments were leaked<sup>3</sup> and it came out that Obama was associated with this Church which was part of a Christian black nationalist movement, a particular congregation that was Afro-centric and black nationalist, that attention started to be paid to the fact that Obama was black. This led to speculation about whether Obama therefore might have a subtext of black militancy that he wasn't talking about. This was one of the signature moments in terms of race becoming part of the election debate.

The Obama presidency has if not reignited issues about race and colour then certainly shown that they haven't gone away. In many ways the emergence of this black man as the President of the United States is comparable to the emergence of prominent Jews in France and Germany and the political and cultural life of those countries in the nineteenth century. There were elements in those societies who were opposed to Jewish civil and political equality just as there are elements in this country who feared the election of Obama or any black person as the President of the United States.

The discourse of post-racialism which emerged in relation to the 2008 campaign was itself really a product of the chattering classes, by that I mean the media commentators and academics who talked about the 'Obama moment' as the post-racial moment. For example, I teach a course called the History of Race in America here at the University of California and I have just finished teaching 80 undergraduates. I have talked about this subject in the way I have done for the 37 years of my career in that I don't mince words and I am very direct about what I want to say. Many of my students find this very disturbing because their views have been shaped by the media and some of them were very resistant to the notion that this in fact *was not* a post-racial society because we had a black president and that because he was of mixed race nobody talked about the fact that he had a white mother. I said to my students, "How would his history have been different if his mother was black and his father white rather than the other way around?" It had never occurred to them that this would have created a different historical narrative and a different historical actor, and one whom many white people in this country would never have voted for because his cultural experience rather than being that of a white working class family would have been that of a black family.

**PLATFORM: In *The Preacher and The Politician* you said that the historical superficiality of journalism has the effect of exacerbating tensions regarding race rather than informing understanding. This was in the context of the shift away from mainstream media to comedic alternatives such as Jon Stewart's Daily Show as a source of reporting news and analysis during the 2008 election. What impact do you think this had on the tenor of race in the debate?**

**CW:** I think it is a way of diffusing issues by turning to humour. It diverts you from the seriousness of the problem and makes you think that these media moments really represent a resolution or a disappearance of the deep structural issues confronting the country, whether these be racial or economic. Not enough attention in these news bites is paid to these problems, it just comes in five or ten minute segments and then it disappears. There is no protracted discussion of these issues. But this can only last for a period of time because the issues are so grave that they require serious attention. You can only laugh at this if you are refusing to think about the deeper implications of what is going on in society and its problems.

This is what Gregory Smithers and I describe as the historical superficiality of journalism. We argued in *The Preacher and The Politician* that the reaction of White Americans to Wright's sermons was grounded in an unexamined pop-culture interpretation of American history, and that the sermons weren't contextualised in

terms of both the preaching tradition of black churchmen in the United States as well as against the history of race relations.

I do think media has prepared the ground in some ways for the acceptance of a black President. Television and other media obviously play an important role in this because for many people that's where they get their history and what they understand about the world from. In American culture from the 1960s forward we see the movement of black people into roles in public television and movies and the tremendous impact that black music has had on popular culture. You can see this in many aspects of American popular culture that are contributory to an acceptance of black culture, for example The Oprah Winfrey Show, the presence of Tavis Smiley on public radio ([www.PBS.org](http://www.PBS.org)). This has prepared a generation of younger people to accept difference in a way that older generations did not.

I also think that this shift towards alternative media has contributed to media's liberalisation. The responsible media in this country has of course spoken to racism, but I don't think that they have been as aggressive as they could have been in debunking these issues. I don't think they have stood up to these issues as much as they could, or offered the level of analysis that they should have. Also the responsible media is offset by other media such as Fox News, the Rupert Murdoch organ in this country, which I would describe as extremely racist. And then you have media commentators like Rush Limbaugh<sup>4</sup> who continues to describe Obama as a Muslim, 'Barack Hussein Obama', emphasising the fact that he may not be an American... One problem with the media in America, it seems to me, is that people now are so divided. If you are conservative you look at the Murdoch operatives, if you are liberal you are going to look at Stephen Colbert (Comedy Central's The Colbert Report) and Jon Stewart (The Daily Show) and PBS NewsHour ([www.pbs.org/newshour](http://www.pbs.org/newshour)). People don't read a wide variety of papers or magazines that would produce some questioning of opinions be they left or right.

**PLATFORM: You have said that race is never far from politics in the United States. Whilst the current debates about post-racism have hinged upon the identity of candidates, can you elaborate on some of the other ways that race and ethnicity become visible in political campaigns and debates?**

**CW:** Whilst the overt language of race isn't talked about any more, this is not to say that the overt language of the past hasn't been replaced by codes. The word 'nigger', for example, is not publicly acknowledged, but words such as violent and militant have come to form part of the discourse in its place. The word Muslim has also now come to mean 'nigger' here... I think that race is still there in politics but it's not often articulated in the way that it should be. For example, we have now a political situation that nobody is talking about in terms of its racial implications, and that is the fact that the Republicans now have a majority in the House of Representatives, and it is in the House of Representatives that all revenue bills in the United States originate. So if they want to slash government programs by 25 per cent this will have a disproportionate effect on poor white people, blacks, Mexicans and so on.

The Obama Presidency has created certain strains that I think the post-racialist argument did not anticipate. This can be seen in the discourses of the Republican Party and the Tea Party movement. We can now see for example that the Republican Party is basically a party of aggrieved white nationalism, of people feeling victimised by someone who ‘doesn’t share their values’. They think they are losing the country and that there is somebody in power who is different historically from what they understand. America emerged from World War II as the richest and the most powerful nation in the world and it is now no longer in that position. Globalisation, and the failure of the government here to effectively deal with our structural, social and educational problems means that we are on the down slope of empire and it means that the country at this particular moment is presided over by someone whom many white Americans cannot identify with. For that reason they are extremely angry because they understand that quality of life is going to decline. It is estimated that in the last century the United States received 90 per cent of the world’s wealth. In this century, that will decline to something like 30 per cent. And Americans are completely unprepared to accept the fact that their lifestyle is going to change, and change dramatically.

**PLATFORM: So are you seeing those issues of nervousness and anxiety about change as inherent within these reactionary discourses?**

**CW:** Absolutely they are at the very heart of those discourses. Those discourses are not to be solely understood on their own, they are at the heart of a cultural system, but also of a very material sense of the world. In healthcare, for example, they can be seen in the hysteria about the Obama healthcare program. The American right wants white America to think that it is going to have to pay for poor brown and black people (and poor white people too). The Republicans have launched a number of legal challenges in response to the health care legislation, and a Judge in Virginia recently ruled that the government could not impose the health care plan because it represented an extension of powers that the constitution did not grant to the federal government.

**PLATFORM: I’d like to return to a consistent theme in your work, that of the argument that a critical appraisal of historiography is vital in understanding contemporary debates and discourses on race. In *Mongrel Nation* you particularly emphasised the resistance of historians and others to the notion of an interracial founding of America rather than the dominant constructions of whiteness that have underpinned renderings of history in the US. This was in relation to claims that Thomas Jefferson fathered one or more children in an interracial relationship with Sally Hemings. How can this historical perspective inform our understanding of the role of discourses such as post-racialism?**

**CW:** In the national imaginary up until recently the United States was historically imagined by historians as purely a white nation. This is changing with the work of the very distinguished historian Annette Gordon Reid and others, as well as in my work, where you see a rethinking of the American past that is more in line with what the country was like in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and what it is like today. The resistance to this arises out of the fact that it is very hard for some people, older people in particular, to think of the United States as anything other than ‘whiteland’ or

‘whitetopia’ and the fact that they refuse to come to grips with this. You see this most clearly in their hostility to Barack Obama. His election is something that is contrary to fact. If this is a white nation then what is it doing with a “coloured” president? And if this is a white nation, then what does it mean for the future? It means that we will have an Asian president, it means that we may even have a Muslim president, we may even have a woman president, and I hope we do. It’s not just that every generation writes history according to its own desires but that there has to be a recognition in the United States that although it was the product of white colonial settlers that the country did not remain white very long.

**PLATFORM: On the topic of whiteness, you have also described colour-blindness as a form of “disavowal” that through an eradication of diversity perpetuates the authority and hierarchy of whiteness (2001, p. 87). To what degree would you see discourses of post-racialism as a further disavowal against broader projects of opposition to or perpetuation of the dominant culture?**

**CW:** I do see them as a further disavowal because I see them as a retreat from colour consciousness. We have to be aware of these colour differences because they speak to all kinds of inequalities and injustices in society and it’s a mistake to assume that just because you pass certain laws that the world has become all of a sudden a place where everything and everybody is equal. I know every day as a black university professor that I don’t have the power of Bill Gates, and I also know as a black man walking around in this country I might be subject to indignities and injustices in the same way that someone living in a ghetto might be victimised. A recent example of this was the brouhaha around Professor Henry Louis Gates, the Professor of African-American Studies at Harvard who was arrested by the police as he was trying to enter his Cambridge home in July 2009. The door to Gates’ home was stuck and he was trying to open it. The local police arrived in response to a 911 call about a man breaking and entering. When they arrived they asked Gates to step to the porch and show his ID. Gates refused and said you wouldn’t treat me this way if I were white. The police then shackled him and took him to jail with the neighbours looking on. Gates responded by saying that the policeman would never have acted that way if he had known who Gates was. I tend to think that this represents a certain kind of racial/class amnesia on the part of Gates, in that some members of his generation of black professionals think that all their accomplishments have somehow effaced the racisms that earlier generations of black people and black men in particular faced. In many ways, black men are still viewed as a menace to society, to quote the name of a famous movie [referring to the 2003 film *Menace II Society*].

The Gates incident illustrates the limits of post-racism. Although we have come very far in American race relations there are still a lot of problems that we have to address, and one of these is this image of black men as a threat in society even when they are accomplished. There has been this debate recently about post-racialism that if Obama had been more outspoken and militant then this would have frightened white people away. But it seems to me that the issue is not about the binary of militancy or accommodation but just the mere fact of his blackness. It didn’t make any difference when it came down in the final analysis to Martin Luther King or Malcolm X, they were both perceived as threats to American society.

What this points to is the failure of society to be as liberal and progressive thinking as it wants to under the rubric of post-racialism and colour-blindness. This suggests to me that a lot of this is purely some kind of verbal fantasy. The United States continues to be a society deeply riven by anxieties about colour and about equality that we would have thought would have gone away some 40 years or more after the passage of the Civil Rights Acts. We have come a long way, and pop-culture programs such as the Oprah Winfrey Show certainly give the appearance of having moved the nation in a new direction. The election of presidential candidates identifying as black *is* significant. But we still have a long way to go before race is not an issue, as discourses of post-racialism would have us believe.

## ENDNOTES

- 1        Jeremiah Wright was at the time the pastor at the Trinity United Church of Christ, a Chicago-based church with a congregation of 6,000 or more members (Wikipedia 2011).
- 2        The term Jim Crow originated in a white minstrel show performed by Daddy Rice in the 1830s. By the 1900s, however, it had generally come to refer to the range of legal, institutional and other activities that disadvantaged and discriminated against black Americans from the period of the late nineteenth century through to the Civil Rights Movements of the 1950s and 1960s. In particular, Jim Crow referred to the laws mandating segregation between black and white Americans during between 1870s through to the 1950s (JimCrowHistory.org).
- 3        Wright expressed what were commonly described as Anti-American views, including perhaps most contentiously the comment that the attacks of September 11 were proof that the “chickens are coming home to roost” (Walker and Smithers 2009, p. 50; Wikipedia 2011).
- 4        The Rush Limbaugh Show is a popular radio talk show hosted by Rush Limbaugh. According to the program’s website it is broadcast on more than 600 radio stations throughout America (www.rushlimbaugh.com).

## REFERENCES

- JimCrowHistory.org. From Terror To Triumph: Historical Overview. *The History of Jim Crow* Retrieved 18 February, 2011, from <http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/history/history.htm>
- Walker, Clarence. E. (2010). *Mongrel Nation: the America begotten by Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- (2007). ‘An Imagined Past’. Labor History Symposium, Labor History, 48(2), 209-247.
- (2001). *We can't go home again: an argument about Afrocentrism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- (1991). *Deromanticizing Black history: critical essays and reappraisals*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

------(1982). *A Rock in a Weary Land: The African Methodist Episcopal Church during the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Walker, C. E., & Smithers, G. (2009). *The Preacher & The Politician: Jeremiah Wright & Barack Obama and the Politics of Race*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Wikipedia. (2011). Jeremiah Wright. Retrieved 18 February, 2011, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremiah\\_Wright](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremiah_Wright)



# “AUSSIE HUMOUR” OR RACISM? *HEY HEY IT’S SATURDAY* AND THE DENIAL OF RACISM IN ONLINE RESPONSES TO NEWS MEDIA ARTICLES

CLEMENCE DUE  
UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

*Abstract: In early October 2009, a blackface parody of the Jackson Five performed on the Hey Hey It’s Saturday reunion reached not only an audience of over 2.5 million people in Australia, but also millions of people around the world after guest judge Harry Connick Jr accused the skit and the show of racism. The incident was widely discussed within various online communities, and whilst widely condemned internationally, online comment sections and responses to online newspaper polls suggested that the overwhelming opinion within Australia was that the skit was not racist. This paper considers the way in which such denials of racism were performed in online comments to a number of newspaper articles and polls.*

## INTRODUCTION

To ratings of over two and a half million viewers, the Australian family variety show *Hey Hey It’s Saturday* returned to the Nine Network in Australia for two reunion shows in 2009, ten years after it was originally taken off air. The second of these shows aired on 7 October 2009 and caused a controversy surrounding accusations of racism that became the subject of national and international newspaper coverage. The incident in question occurred as part of the Red Faces amateur talent quest section of the show. On this segment, a group of doctors performed a sketch titled the *Jackson Jive*, in which they mimed to Michael Jackson’s *Can You Feel It*. The *Jackson Jive* was originally performed on the show 20 years earlier and revived as a form of tribute to the history of *Hey Hey*. The performance included a Michael Jackson impersonator with a whitened face and five back-up singers with blackened faces. Singer Harry Connick Jr, a guest judge on the segment, gave the *Jackson Jive* a score of zero (out

of ten), stating that the show would never have been put to air in America. Later, he said that if he knew the skit was going to be on the show he would never have appeared on it, and that “I just wanted to say on behalf of my country, I know it was done humorously, but, you know, we have spent so much time trying to not make black people look like buffoons, that when we see something like that we take it really to heart” (Molitorisz and Steffens, 2009, no page).

The incident made headlines around the world, as international newspapers and commentators condemned the act as demeaning (see Mitchell, 2009 for a discussion of this), mind-boggling (Hyde, 2009) and ridiculous (Kyles, 2009). In Australia, however, the response was more mixed and largely argued for the supposedly humorous nature of the skit, thereby defending against accusations of racism. For example, opinion writers stated that the performance was ignorant rather than racist (Bolt, 2009) and even Australian politicians weighed into the debate by arguing that the skit was simply meant to be humorous (Millar, 2009). A strong majority of public opinion – as reflected in opinion polls and online comments – interpreted the skit as “just a bit of fun”. Many people argued that since Australia does not have the same history with blackface as America (where minstrel shows have a long and problematic tradition), the skit could not be considered offensive (see news.com.au article *Readers say Hey Hey Jackson Jive skit ‘not racist’* for an outline of the public response to opinion polls for News Limited online newspapers).

This paper considers such responses, as seen in online comments, in order to examine how Australians defended the show and themselves from accusations of racism, and to consider the implications of humour in relation to denials of racism within Australia more broadly. Specifically, the paper considers two aspects of these online comments. Firstly, drawing upon the seminal work of van Dijk (1993), the paper uses a thematic analysis approach to consider *how* these denials were performed at the level of the text – that is, what resources the writers utilised in order to deny racism. And secondly, drawing on the work of Hage (1998) and Stratton (1998), the paper considers the implications of such denials at a broader level, in particular in relation to the identity of Australia as a multicultural society.

Before examining the literature surrounding denials of racism and Australian identity, a brief discussion of the blackface tradition itself is called for (see, for example, Gubar, 1997; Lott, 1992; Saxton, 1975; Strausbaugh, 2007 for more detailed examinations of blackface and minstrel shows). In relation to the blackface tradition, Lott argues that “while [blackface] was organized around the quite explicit ‘borrowing’ of black cultural materials for white dissemination (and profit), a borrowing that ultimately depended upon the material relations of slavery, the minstrel show obscured those relations by pretending that slavery was amusing, right and natural” (1992, p. 23). Thus the blackface tradition in America was based largely on the slavery and oppression of black (African) Americans and functioned to reinforce stereotypes of black people as inferior. Indeed, as Saxton argues, “Blackface minstrels’ dominance of popular entertainment amounted to half a century of inurement to the uses of white supremacy” (1975, p. 27).

A note regarding terminology is also required before continuing with a discussion of definitions of racism. As the skit in question, and subsequent media and online discussions, employed racial binaries of “black” and “white”, this paper does

the same. It is acknowledged here that such binaries are not congruent with the broadly supported position of race as being social constructed, and that they do not reflect real-world experiences in which lived experiences of race are broad and include much more than “black” and “white”. As Riggs argues, to refer to racial identities such as “black” and “white” is:

not to naively accept that race as a category is useful, or a biological fact, or internally coherent. Rather, to ‘recognise race’ (as in referring to someone as ‘white’) is to acknowledge that the assumption of racialized differences continues to inform how we relate to one another as people, and that this is the legacy of a long history of violence that has been perpetuated in the name of imperialism and empire against people classified as racial others (Riggs, 2006, p. 350).

This article employs the terms “black” and “white” to denote those racialised differences which inform and are taken as given in the *Hey Hey* debate. These terms are used mindfully and it is recognised that they are reductive, and frequently function to maintain power relations that privilege people on the basis of features that are generally taken as denoting racial differences, such as skin colour. Correspondingly, it is also important to note here that this paper deals with an Australian case study concerning issues of race and racism. It is therefore highly localised within the Australian context of cultural and race relations and as such is not considered generalisable to other countries in which race relations will take a different form.

#### **“MODERN RACISM” AND DENIALS OF RACISM**

Overt expressions of racism such as those associated with blackface performances and minstrel shows are now broadly taboo in Western countries (see Augoustinos and Every, 2007; McConahay, 1986; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Instead, research on “modern” or “symbolic” racism has shown that racism no longer manifests as overtly racist acts but rather in more subtle forms, such as arguments stating that marginalised groups transgress norms within communities (Augoustinos et al, 1999; Augoustinos and Every, 2007; Liu and Mills, 2006). This research suggests that racially marginalised groups are no longer overtly discriminated against on the basis of race *per se*, but are instead criticised for violating traditional values, and are therefore constructed as deserving of the criticism they receive (Simmons and LeCouteur, 2008). This notion of implicit racism directed at minority groups on the basis of cultural issues has important implications for definitions of racism. For example, Wetherell and Potter argue that, “Racist discourse, in our view, should be seen as discourse (of whatever content) which has the effect of establishing, sustaining and reinforcing oppressive power relations” (1992, p. 70). As such, racism requires both prejudice towards a group of people based on the social construction of race *and* the power to oppress those groups of people. Thus it does not make sense – at least within Australia as a country with a history of colonisation – to discuss racism from marginalised groups towards dominant ones. This definition is important in that, whilst acknowledging that individual acts of racism can and do occur, a broader definition of racism involves discourse which functions to further marginalise groups who are already disadvantaged.

The more implicit nature of “modern racism” has led to increasing taboos surrounding overtly racist opinions or actions. This taboo means that accusations of racism, such as those made by Harry Connick Jr in relation to the *Hey Hey* skit, carry a lot of weight, and the people at whom such accusations are levelled are strongly invested in refuting them. This means that even though overt forms of racism are considered unacceptable, denials of racism continue to have an important function while racism exists in more “symbolic” forms. In relation to such denials, van Dijk argues:

In general, a denial presupposes a real or potential accusation, reproach or suspicion of others about one’s present or past actions or attitudes, and asserts that such attacks against one’s moral integrity are not warranted. That is denials may be a move in a strategy of *defence*, as well as part of the strategy of positive self-presentation (van Dijk, 1993, p. 180).

Thus denials of racism respond to a perceived accusation of racism and can both defend the speaker from such accusations and present oneself (or in this case, a television show or one’s country) in a positive light. Previous work considering the denial of racism argues that a number of techniques are available to people when they attempt to defend what could otherwise be considered racist behaviour (Wetherell and Potter, 1992; van Dijk, 1993). In a seminal work used widely in the study of racism (see, for example, Simmons and LeCouteur, 2008; LeCouteur and Augoustinos, 2001; Augoustinos and Every, 2007; Saxton, 2004; Johnson and Suhr, 2003), van Dijk (1993, pp. 179-82) argues that techniques for the denial of racism include: the denial of racist *intent*; trivialising the seriousness of the racist incident; reversals of racism in which dominant (typically white) group members become the targets of discrimination; and positive self-presentation. Although the work of van Dijk (1993) is now 17 years old, his work in analysing denials of racism remains centrally important in studies concerning race and racist discourse since, as Augoustinos and Every argue, “contemporary race talk... is strategically organized to deny racism” (2007, p. 126). Given this, van Dijk’s techniques for the analysis of denial provide analysts with critical tools for examining how such denials are mobilised. In the context of this paper, such tools allow for a detailed examination of the ways in which humour is used to deny racism, or to justify discourses that could otherwise be seen as racist. Each of these techniques can be utilised in order to deny that a particular incident was racist. These will now be discussed in further detail, followed by a more general discussion regarding race in Australia.

By “reverse racism”, van Dijk (1993) refers to the tactic by which dominant group members turn charges of racism around, and argue instead that it is *they* who are being discriminated against and who are the victims of political correctness. In Australia, for example, non-indigenous Australians are often depicted as discriminated against due to policies which supposedly give Indigenous Australians “more than their fair share” (Augoustinos and Every, 2007). However, van Dijk (1993), Hage (1998), Saxton (2004) and Wetherell and Potter (1992) have argued that true reverse racism is impossible in countries like Australia since both prejudice *and* power are required in order to oppress groups on the basis of their race. Importantly, and as discussed previously, such definitions of racism are contingent upon context and, of course, are also dynamic. A definition of racism as requiring both prejudice

and power is salient in the context of Australia as a colonial country in which, as discussed throughout this paper, there remain residual effects of a desire for Australia to be seen as a “white” country in which those located as “white” people are seen to be “native” (as opposed to Australia’s First Nations peoples).

In this sense, whilst acknowledging other conceptualisations of power in relation to racism – such as Foucault’s (1977) arguments concerning power as dispersed and circulatory rather than centralised – this paper maintains a definition of racism which requires not only prejudice but also power in terms of the maintenance of a differential allocation of privilege and disadvantage. In Australia, such power is located in the hands of white Australians and remains evident in the continuing effects of colonisation upon Indigenous Australians, in institutional practices such as those seen in mainstream news media and the political arena, and in the effects of restrictive border control policies that adversely affect asylum seekers and immigrants seeking to enter this country who may be labelled as “Others”. Nevertheless, the argument that the dominant (white) group in Australia is being unfairly treated when compared to marginalised groups is frequently strong enough to defend against accusations of racism, particularly in light of changes within Australia (such as policies of multiculturalism) which led to a perceived sidelining of majority group needs and a foregrounding of marginalised interests (Ahluwalia and McCarthy, 1998; Hage, 1998).

Next, denials of racism based on “mitigation” are predicated on the ability to down-play or trivialise the seriousness of the event or talk in order to mitigate the possible negative consequences resulting from it (van Dijk, 1993). In relation to humour, accusations of racism are frequently mitigated by arguing that, for instance, the speaker was “only joking”, and that the *intent* of the humour was not racist (Billig, 2001). Thus mitigations of racism are tied closely to denials of racism based on arguments of intent. Van Dijk (1993) argues that denials of racist intent are able to diminish the responsibility of the person accused of racism, and therefore to defend against accusations of taboo, overtly racist, attitudes or opinions by arguing that the speaker or actor did not *intend* their speech or actions to be racist. This is also discussed by Riggs (2009) who analyses the denial of racist intent in the 2007 series of the UK’s *Celebrity Big Brother* reality television show. Riggs argues that such denials overlook the social *consequences* that racism may have, regardless of the initial intention, and therefore denials of racist intent are predicated on the speaker’s denial of the effects of entrenched racism in colonial societies. Similarly, Liu and Mills argue that what they term “plausible deniability” is

theoretically central for the communication of modern racism... Plausible deniability is a communication tactic that is used to warrant or defend public discourse about minority groups against accusations of racism by constructing statements in such a way that the speaker can convincingly disavow any racist intent (Liu and Mills, 2006, p. 84).

Thus, the denial of racist intent is central to modern racism in that such denials work to protect people from accusations of an overt racism that is now increasingly taboo. Those who do not wish to be seen as racist or as defending racist behaviour are therefore invested in being able to deny racist *intent* whilst still maintaining (or defending) an argument or position which discriminates on the basis of race.

Finally, denials of racism can also be made through reference to positive self-presentation. In the case of Australia, Hage (1998) argues that positive self-presentation is frequently achieved through discourses of “tolerance”. Thus, Australia presents itself as valuing tolerance in its treatment of those considered “Others” despite legislation such as the White Australia policy, which privileged the intake of immigrants from Britain, Ireland and New Zealand until 1972 and therefore effectively reinforced the dominance and centrality of whiteness in Australia. As such, discourses of positive self-presentation in relation to white countries are therefore frequently tied to the rhetoric of nationalism discussed above in which differential treatment of those depicted as “Others” is, rather than being considered racist, instead re-framed as necessary for the good of the nation. Augoustinos and Every (2007) argue that positive self-presentation is able to protect the in-group as a whole from accusations of racism, and is tied to negative other-presentation. Using the above example, Australia’s “tolerance” can be compared to the “intolerance” of other countries which *do* ostensibly have racist immigration policies.

#### **AUSTRALIAN HUMOUR, RACE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

It has also been argued that “modern” or “symbolic” racism can be conceived of as an expression of nationalism, in that negative attitudes or restrictive immigration policies towards those considered “Others” are able to be expressed as a desire to maintain national security, a sense of national identity, and to defend the interests of the (white) nation against some outside threat (Augoustinos and Every, 2007; Hage, 1998; LeCouteur and Augoustinos, 2001). To this end, Augoustinos and Every point out that “the category of nation is increasingly taking over from race in legitimating oppressive practices toward minority groups and, indeed, as a means by which to sanitise and deracialise racist discourses” (2007, p. 133). Thus racist opinions or practices now materialise (alongside more “traditional” forms of racism) in the form of patriotism or pride in a country on the basis of a particular set of values that may discriminate against and exclude minority groups of people. Again, this form of “modern” racism is considered not to be predicated on overt discrimination against racially marginalised groups, but instead such groups remain marginalised due to practices which foreground the interests of the (white) nation, and its supposed values and norms.

In Australia, one such norm or value which serves to supposedly “define” Australians and differentiate them from others is that of humour. “Aussie” humour is meant to be self-deprecating, “ocker”, defiant, and ironic (Rainbird, 2004). This form of humour has largely been seen as uniquely Australian, and one that separates Australia from other countries, thereby becoming fundamental to the Australian identity. Importantly, and as will be elaborated in more detail later in this paper, this value of Aussie humour is one which is largely associated with a white, “mainstream” Australian identity. Indeed, certain aspects of Aussie humour – such as its anti-politically correct stance – have been argued to play an important role in maintaining the centrality of this white identity in Australia by fighting against the rise of policies such as multiculturalism which were seen as prioritising marginalised voices at the expense of the “ordinary Aussie battler” (Rainbird, 2004).

Indeed, many researchers have argued that race and racism still play a central role in Australia. For example, in his book *White Nation*, Hage (1998) argues that the

dominant group in Australia (i.e. white Australians) perceive themselves to be normatively “Australian”, and therefore able to set the norms and values to which those seen as “Others” must adhere. Thus, whilst Australia claims to be multicultural, the reality of this is that there is a dominant white majority that see themselves as managers of the national space who are able to “tolerate” Others. Whilst obviously restrictive immigration policies such as the White Australia Policy are no longer in operation, Hage (1998) argues that current policies surrounding multiculturalism maintain the dominance of white people in Australia. Stratton argues along similar lines in his book *Race Daze* (1998) in which he asserts that policies of multiculturalism in Australia are conservative, and leave whiteness as central and as a benchmark against which all other people are measured. Furthermore, Stratton argues that within multicultural Australia there is a myth that the concept of race has disappeared, when in fact it has become a signifier of culture and therefore possibly of difference. In making this argument, Stratton echoes Etienne Balibar’s (1991) concept of “neo-racism” in an Australian context. The concept of “neo-racism” in which culture replaces the biological notion of race has important consequences for this paper, since, as Balibar points out, matters of racism based on culture will differ depending on national situations, thus again highlighting the highly contextualised and localised nature of discussions of race and racism.

The present article therefore discusses each of the aforementioned techniques for the denial of racism in turn, and illustrates the way in which they played out in relation to the *Hey Hey* racism debate. Furthermore, the paper examines how such denials were frequently made on the basis of the incident simply being about Aussie humour and considers the construction of a mainstream Australian identity portrayed within such arguments.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Data*

Much has changed in the world of media since *Hey Hey It's Saturday* was originally broadcast in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. A skit performed on an Australian TV show can be broadcast around the world courtesy of video sharing websites such as YouTube. Similarly, the advent of online journalism has made it easier for people to contribute to discussions surrounding news items through online opinion polls and “reader’s comments” sections. Comments left by the general public in response to news items allow for an insight into public opinion surrounding a topic that, though obviously not able to be generalised to all people involved, nevertheless does provide a reflection of public sentiment.

This paper analyses online comments written in response to articles published online on news websites from three of Australia’s major news providers; News Limited’s *Herald Sun* (broadly considered a conservative newspaper), Fairfax’s *The Age* (considered a more liberal newspaper), and the national news website *news.com.au* which also publishes content from the News Limited press. The first of these articles was entitled *Controversy for Hey Hey It's Saturday over Jackson 5 Skit* which was published in its original form on the *Herald Sun* website on October 7, just hours after the show was aired. This article received a total of 1088 comments, and was later updated as *Acting Premier Rob Hulls says Daryl Somers right to apologise*

over Jackson Jive sketch. Secondly, comments on an article published on *The Age* blog website, entitled *Hey Hey Uproar* (a total of 737 comments) were considered, and finally comments on an article published on *news.com.au* entitled *Hey Hey It's Saturday in Red Faces Racist Row* (a total of 371 comments) were also included in the data set for this analysis. These articles were chosen in order to provide an overall picture of the response provided by online comments to articles published in major newspapers. By virtue of their nature as online comments, however, it is important to note again that this data set does not necessarily provide a representative sample of public sentiment in relation to this issue. The data set does, however, provide an important snapshot of the (vocal) Australian public reaction to the accusations of racism made by Harry Connick Jr. The comments examined in this paper are included verbatim.

### *Analytic Notes*

In order to analyse this data corpus, the current paper utilised a thematic analytic approach (see, for example, Braun and Clarke, 2006) in which the online responses to the three relevant articles were analysed for the dominant themes appearing in the texts. Thematic analysis was chosen for this analysis due to the rigorous nature of Braun and Clarke's approach, which enabled the large data corpus to be analysed thoroughly and consistently. In particular, the first stage of analysis involved data familiarisation and therefore involved reading over the corpus of online comments. Secondly, the data was systematically coded for interesting features, and these codes were then collated to reveal potential themes in the third step. Fourthly, these themes were reviewed to determine whether they were indeed reflective of the entire data set and then the themes were named. Finally, extracts were chosen which contained representative and compelling examples of the themes in question. It is noteworthy therefore that the broader theme of the denial of racism was the most salient theme within this data set. This is not to say that there were no instances of comments in which people wrote to support the claim of racism made by Harry Connick Jr, however these comments were not common enough to be considered a theme in and of itself.

Within the broader theme of the denial of racism, the themes returned using this approach included: a) comparisons between blackface and whiteface, with associated arguments that if the latter is not generally considered racist then the former should not be either; b) accusations of excessive political correctness; c) claims that Australia does not have the same racist past (or history of blackface) as America, and that the comments made by Harry Connick Jr were therefore irrelevant in the Australian context; and d) references to Aussie humour as a way of denying racism. These four main themes are considered in this paper in the context of Van Dijk's techniques regarding the denial of racism, and their function in building a particular image of Australian identity.

### *Analysis*

As mentioned previously, denial of racism in the skit was the most common response from the public in Australia. According to an article entitled *Readers say Hey Hey Jackson Jive skit 'not racist'* published on the News Ltd *news.com.au* website on 8 October (the day after the show went to air), almost thirty thousand people voted in

online polls and more than fifteen hundred left comments on News Ltd sites in relation to the *Hey Hey It's Saturday* news story. Poll results ranged from 53 per cent saying that the skit wasn't racist at *couriermail.com.au* to 81 per cent saying that the skit wasn't racist at *perthnow.com.au*. In light of this response and the techniques discussed earlier, this paper examines how such denials were mobilised, and how they functioned to build on and reinforce a particular image of Australian identity.

### REVERSE RACISM, MITIGATION AND 'PC GONE MAD'

As outlined earlier, van Dijk (1993) argues that racism is frequently justified using a technique called "reverse racism", in which dominant group members argue that in fact it is they who are being discriminated against or disadvantaged rather than marginalised groups. One way in which such justifications or denials were seen in online comments was through the argument that it would not equally be considered racist if a black person were to impersonate a white person. Examples of this argument are seen in the following comments. Throughout this analysis, the names of the respondents have been removed and replaced with numbers.

- R1: It's strange that Harry Connick Jr seems to think white men dressed as black men is racist. When 2004 US movie 'White Chicks' has black men dressed as white girls is not seen as racist. (*Herald Sun*)
- R2: This has been blown totally out of proportion. It's a tribute. They had done this before and they weren't mocking any race or disrespecting mj.... I would also like to point out that there was a white painted face as well. Is that being racist too? (*Herald Sun*)
- R3: Man I love double standards. Making fun of anything but white people is bad, but once it's racism towards white people then bam! It's a-okay. Racism is a matter of perspective and opinion, if people stopped taking everything so seriously when it wasn't necessary (i.e, comedy) then there would be no racism. (*news.com.au*)
- R4: It wasn't a racist act when it was first performed 20 years ago and it wasn't a racist act tonight. Just another uptight American with no sense of humour. I would not be offended if five black men appeared on Red Faces with white paint on their faces. (*Herald Sun*)
- R5: Black face minstrels were never part of our culture. Yes this 'art form' did belittle Afro Americans and is not acceptable now or then but I do not see this act as a minstrels act. It is just white guys doing a cover of an act by Afro Americans. Lousy music but not racist. If black Australians did Abba would we white guys be offended. No I suggest not. (*The Age blog*)

In these comments, racism is denied through arguments that black people dressing up as white people would not be seen as offensive, or receive the same response from Harry Connick Jr, and that the outcry internationally is therefore a "double standard". Such arguments are predicated on a form of "equality" which

views equal *treatment* as equality rather than equal *outcomes* (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). For example, such arguments overlook the history of racism and oppression reflected within the blackface tradition by equating painting one's face black with painting one's face white. Similarly, such arguments ignore historically unequal power relations in both American and Australian society by assuming that a black person with their face painted white has the same power to oppress and ridicule white people as would a white person with their face painted black.

As mentioned previously in relation to the definition of racism at a broader level as involving the maintenance of differential allocations of privilege, whilst it *can* be considered racist for a white person to dress up as a black person, it is not equally racist for a black person to dress up as a white person, given the differences in power relations inherent in the social constructions of these racial categories. Nevertheless, it is worth noting here that a black person painting their face white (whilst not an example of racism) can be read instead as *resistance* to racism. Gilbert argues that, in the Australian context, whiteface has been used not only “as a revisionist tactic designed to deflect - and reverse - the imperial gaze” (2003, p. 679), but also as a vehicle to render colonialism and whiteness (traditionally invisible and normative) visible. Thus not only is the use of whiteface not able to be considered racist in the same way that blackface is, but furthermore it can be considered as a method which can highlight and resist entrenched colonial racism and white privilege.

Given this, it is important to highlight the fact that the members of the *Jackson Jive* skit were themselves ethnically diverse, with the man playing Michael Jackson identifying as Sri Lankan Australian. This man whitened his face for this performance, and this was picked up on in online comments, such as R2 above, and the following:

- R6: How was it racist painting your skin colour to the Jackson 5. And its not like they were all black either, the Indian member of the group painted it white... unless its racist against all nationalities (which ironically the group was extremely diverse in their cultural background themselves). (*news.com.au*)

Interestingly, the fact that the man playing Michael Jackson had his face painted white was a point of difference from the original skit. Online comments such as the one above noted this, and used it as an argument against accusations of racism, arguing that given that the Jackson character had white paint on his face, the accusations of racism could not hold “unless its racist against all nationalities.” There are several points to be made about comments such as that made in R6. Firstly, comparisons between the “racist” nature of painting one's face black to impersonate an African American and painting one's face white to impersonate Michael Jackson work in a similar way to arguments of reverse racism discussed above in that they do not account for the history of oppression associated with the blackface tradition, a history which does not equally apply to painting one's face white. Additionally, painting one's face white to impersonate Michael Jackson may do little to challenge existing stereotypes of race given the already racialised body of Jackson. Secondly, drawing on the diverse racial identities of the men involved in the skit to defend against accusations of racism allows online commentators to argue against accusations of racism due to a presumption that the blackface tradition, when enacted

by people who self-identify or are identified as not white, does not contain the same elements of racism. This is interesting given the arguments above that racism requires both prejudice *and* power, and that, as non-white people, the people involved in this skit may not have the required power of oppression. Again, however, it is arguable that the *tradition* of blackface does have this power, and when played out to a white host on a commercial television network, a skit such as the *Jackson Jive* does little to challenge existing stereotypes and more to support them.

Denials of racism based on this type of “reverse racism” could also be considered ways in which the possible racist nature of the skit was mitigated. Mitigation of racism was further seen in respondent’s comments which focussed on political correctness as the catalyst for the comments made by Harry Connick Jr. For example:

- R7: Oh for Heaven’s Sake! It was a bit of harmless fun. It was so wonderful to see Hey Hey back on telly and then this rubbish! I am of Italian and Greek Background. Do I become insulted with all the ‘wog’ jokes around? Of course not! You have to be able to laugh at yourself. It would be a very, very sad world if we all got to the stage where we were unable to appreciate humour and have a good laugh. Must we become so terribly precious and politically correct all the time? Come on you guys! Just appreciate it for the funny skit that it was and please stop taking everything so seriously. Isn’t this world serious enough? (*The Age blog*)
- R8: As an ESL teacher I work with people from all over the globe, and one thing I have learned is that every culture has its own version of humour. What is side-splitting in one country leaves another for dead. This is obviously what happened in the wonderful *Hey Hey* reunion. The U.S. is uncomfortably aware of its slavery history, leading to a degree of PC that is unwarranted in Australia. Sure, we have our racism issues, but we are also able to laugh at controversies, and at ourselves, in a way that puts matters into perspective thus allowing tensions to dissipate. Harry Connick Jr. was right to be apprehensive about how his appearance on the Red Faces panel would look to his U.S. fan base, however, *Hey Hey* was also right in allowing the six multinational doctors to revive their *Jackson Jive* skit. The fact that the medical student who played Michael is now a plastic surgeon is the kind of irony that Australians delight in. (*Herald Sun*)
- R9: If US people are offended that's their problem it was an Australian television show made for Australians. I they take offence at light hearted comedy like this which was not meant to offend but entertain then too bad. This another case of political correctness gone mad. (*news.com.au*)
- R10: Ahhhh the politically correct get on the band wagon again. It would be interesting to know how many people thought that it was funny... and THEN thought... how politically incorrect. Geez... how

refreshing to know that someone has the balls to have a crack at breaking the new ‘norms.’ Well done Daryl and co. (*Herald Sun*)

- R11: Not racist – poor taste – maybe but in reality now just the subject of too many politically correct persons with too much time on their hands. guys put it in perspective – the act was a re enactment of past skit 20 years ago. That was the whole point of the show – bringing back some of the past. does this mean we can never air any al jolson footage or even his songs because clearly the politically correct naysayers would have to now label him racist and off limits – or is it ok to be a politically correct hypocrite. (*The Age blog*)

Within these comments, the seriousness of racism is mitigated by arguing that instead of being a reaction to what he saw as racist, Harry Connick Jr’s accusation was based on overly-sensitive political correctness. These comments position political correctness as inherently a negative, restrictive force that interferes with people’s ability to find the skit funny and to “laugh at controversies”. As such, accusations of the racist nature of the skit are dismissed by locating them as the result of overly politically correct sensibilities, and therefore as an over-reaction to something which was simply meant to be humorous. Indeed, such arguments further mitigate racism by instead constructing the skit as “humorous” rather than as racist. In relation to appearances of political correctness in a right-wing German newspaper, Johnson and Suhr argue that,

adherents of ‘political correctness’ are being constructed as an outgroup which insists on subjecting the rest of the population to an ongoing process of moral blackmail vis à vis the recent German past, thereby forestalling the efforts of those who wish to ‘progress’ towards a more normalized sense of national self-identity” (2003, p. 64).

These constructions of political correctness were also seen in the above comments whereby it is argued that subscribers to political correctness create a “boring and sterile” world and that, rather than the skit being racist, *Hey Hey* instead has “the balls to have a crack at breaking the new ‘norms’”.

Indeed, an aversion to the politically correct has been an ubiquitous part of constructions of the “Australian identity” made through humour, in which the emergence of multiculturalism and a perceived “favouring” of minority or marginalised group interests has led to a backlash through critiques of politically correct sensibilities – notably seen in the rise of Pauline Hanson and the conservative Howard government which promised to govern “for the mainstream” (Ahluwalia and McCarthy, 1998). In particular, debate surrounding political correctness has focused on the right to free-speech, and opposition to oppression (Wark, 1997; Rainbird, 2004), something which resonates exceptionally loudly in the genre of humour and comedy. Indeed, in Australian comedy circles, political correctness has been largely criticised as irrational and as oppressive (Rainbird, 2004). Rainbird (2004) and Johnson (2000) have both argued that such a backlash against political correctness can be read as a reaction to perceived changes in the Australian identity, in which the centrality of the dominant (white, male, heterosexual) Australian is being challenged and shifted. In the context of the *Hey Hey* controversy and the comments seen above,

such arguments can be read as a similar backlash against shifting values from the 1980s to the present day, in which Aussie humour is seen as being under threat from oppressive, anti free-speech forces, especially given the fact that the skit did not receive similar criticisms when it was originally performed (see, for example, R11 above). Arguments about accusations of racism being politically correct – particularly directed toward Harry Connick Jr – therefore reinforce an identity for Australia as being able to ‘have a laugh’ at what may otherwise be read as racist or controversial.

**POSITIVE SELF-PRESENTATION, HUMOUR, AND DENIALS OF RACIST INTENT:  
BUILDING AN AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY**

Each of the comments above also defended against accusations of racism by appealing to an argument that the skit was based on humour. For example, in R8 above, the writer claims an authority position by stating that he/she is an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher, and has therefore worked “with people from all over the globe”. The writer then continues to argue that “every culture has its own version of humour”, and that this difference in humour is what led to the accusations of racism. Such arguments suggest that since the incident was intended to be *funny*, it follows that it is not also racist, as well as building on a particular construction of Australian identity based on a type of humour. This argument was frequently seen in comments in response to the news item, with several examples shown below:

- R12: After watching *Hey Hey* it was clear just how dated the show was but as for Mr Precious Harry, what a lot of rubbish. The skit was taking the mickey out of The Jackson Five and only a precious yank could have turned the emphasis to racism. How could you do a skit like that without dressing similar to the person you were taking off. Connick is a great performer but seems to be just a little superior to us colonials. Have we really all become as precious as him? I hope not, because I don't believe the skit was in any way designed to be offensive to Afro Americans! (*Herald Sun*)
- R13: Totally enjoyable show! Only downer was Harry. Us Aussies are laid back in our humour and don't look at things with a racist viewpoint - the poor guys were doing the skit for CHARITY... good on them!!! Apart from that, I loved it, my kids loved it, and my parents loved it. 3 generations of *Hey Hey* fans!! Well done guys... Thanks!! (*Herald Sun*)
- R14: I guess you could say white Australians suffer the oppression of not being allowed to have an opinion on oppression due to the lack of oppression throughout their history. Christ! How some of you survive in those tiny little narrow heads of yours I'll never understand. (*The Age blog*)
- R15: Oh that's rich. Being called racist by the Americans. I guess that we don't have enough history in being racist like the yanks. We didn't import black slaves and beat them to work for us. We didn't have "whites only" waiting rooms, buses, schools and so on. No, we just have an amazing multicultural melting pot of people that have all managed to get on with each other, and still able to poke fun at each

other. Australia is a perfect example of how to be racially tolerant, unlike other so called 'civilized' countries. Get a life and chill out!  
(*The Age* blog)

These comments argue that "Australians" have a capacity to not take offence at everything, to poke fun at people, and to not "look at things with a racist point of view", thus explicitly working up a particularly Australian identity based on this form of humour. As such, they effectively deny racism not only in the skit, but in Australia as a country. Here, racism is mitigated by reference to humour and a supposedly tolerant past, so that such incidences are viewed in cultural terms as part of an innate and unique "Australian value" of humour rather than in terms of racism, thus again asserting a sense of nationalism whilst denying racism. In line with van Dijk's (1993) argument that denials of racism involve both a defensive position and a position that builds positive self-presentation, these arguments defend against racism and present Australia in a positive light; by comparing the country favourably to Americans who have a "history in being racist". Such defences are discussed by Billig (2001) who argues that the defence "I was only joking" is frequently used to justify racism, and that those people belonging to the "in-group" may defend comments or incidents as "just a joke" which those considered "Others", or indeed other people in general, may instead find racist.

The denials of racism based on the intention of the skit to be humorous were also examples of the denial of racism due to positive self-presentation, and therefore played a role in building an image of Australia as anti-racist and as able to "poke fun" at oneself or others. This presentation of Australia as humorous and of America as inherently lacking in humour (or as not having an understanding of what Australians may find funny) positions Australians as fun-loving and able to laugh at themselves and others, and contrasts this with an uptight "precious" America which easily takes offence. This was particularly seen in R14 above which not only denied oppression in Australian history (thereby denying the history of policy differentiation and violence towards Indigenous Australians and immigrants seen as "not-white"), but went so far as to position *white* Australians as "suffering oppression". Also of interest in these comments is the fact that the national categories of "Australians" and "Americans" are used frequently in these arguments without reference to race *per se* and therefore arguably function to overlook those groups of people within both Australia and America who *are* the targets of racism and who may find white people impersonating black people to be not only offensive, but also racist and discriminatory. Such comments also conflate all Australians into one category, and therefore work to imply that *all* Australians find such humour funny, rather than only certain members of the population. As such, these comments work up an identity for Australia that is predicated on mainstream values and "ordinary Aussie battlers" and can therefore be read as a reaction to more "modern" values that centre marginalised voices (for example, by considering the implications of blackface). Thus these comments reflect the move away from concepts of overt racism to categorisation of people on the basis of nationality, as discussed previously in this paper. These comments therefore highlight the flexible nature of denials of racism as outlined by van Dijk (1993). These findings are discussed further in the conclusion.

## CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated how a number of techniques regarding the denial of racism were utilised in online comments made in response to the accusations of racism within the *Jackson Jive* skit. Furthermore, this paper has shown how these denials were able to build on and reinforce particular constructions of the Australian national identity, particularly in relation to “Aussie humour” and Australia as a country free from racism. Thus the response to the *Hey Hey* incident as it appeared in these comments is able to be read not only as a denial of racism in a particular event, but a defence against racism in Australia as a country, and a construction of Australian national identity specifically through the vehicle of humour.

It is worth noting here that van Dijk (1993) has argued that the denial of either racism or prejudice can in fact be read as yet another expression of racism itself, for example by justifying acts that could be seen to be racist by not acknowledging them as such. Denials of racism therefore serve a socio-political function in that if racism is unilaterally denied, then it is perceived that there is no problem and therefore no need to take measures against it. Thus, denials of racism can present events such as the blackface skit performed on *Hey Hey It's Saturday* as “a bit of fun” in a country that does not have a problem with racism, and therefore argue that no one should take offence. Of course, such constructions effectively deny a voice to those people who *do* take offence, positioning them as excessively politically correct or sensitive, and as reacting to an offence which did not exist – as seen in the comments analysed in this paper.

Furthermore, constructions of the accusations of racism made by Harry Connick Jr as being overly politically correct are able to be read as an assertion of an Australian identity predicated on “norms” and “values” of mainstream Australia (which include the ability to “poke fun” at oneself and others), and a rebuttal of what is seen as the foregrounding of minority or marginalised voices within multicultural Australia (Ahluwalia and McCarthy, 1998; Hage, 1998). For example, the many comments seen in this paper that claimed that the skit was not racist as it was “just a bit of fun” indicate the construction of an Australian identity predicated upon an “ocker”, “battler” identity stemming from a particular concept of humour that centres values seen to be typically “Aussie” – that is, an ability to poke fun at all people equally and to laugh at what others might see as controversial. This is particularly of interest as whilst the original skit may not have drawn upon such values *per se* in its performance of the *Jackson Jive* (although of course, part of the blackface tradition itself is caricature), this mainstream Australian identity was worked up in the subsequent denials of racism in the skit as seen in these comments. Interestingly, such assertions were made in spite of the multi-ethnic background of the performers of the skit, thereby re-asserting multicultural Australia *provided* that “mainstream” Australian values are being adhered to (Hage, 1998; Stratton, 1998).

Finally, as mentioned previously, the large-scale response this incident received could be read as a denial of racism not only in the skit in question, but also in Australia more generally. Indeed, this was often made explicit in the comments analysed in which Australia was often compared favourably to America both in terms of its (apparently) non-racist past and its so-called ability to laugh at “controversy”. In light of van Dijk’s (1993) argument that the denial of racism is just another expression

of racism, denials of racism in incidents like the *Hey Hey* skit become more insidious than simply denials that a particular skit on a family variety show was an exhibition of racism. Instead, the denial of racism in Australia as a country, together with arguments that Australia does not have the same history of racism as America, work to overlook Australia's history of immigration and other policies which differentiate between people on the basis of perceived cultural differences and race; as seen, for example, in the 2007 comments by then Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews regarding the supposed "failure to integrate" on the part of Sudanese refugees (Topsfield and Rood, 2007). Perhaps even more problematically, such denials also function to further marginalise those people who *do* experience racism within Australia by denying the existence of racism altogether and instead reinforcing an "ordinary" Australian identity as a country in which people are able to "laugh at themselves and controversy".

## REFERENCES

- Acting Premier Rob Hulls says Daryl Somers right to apologise over Jackson Jive sketch. (2009, 7 October). *Herald Sun*. Retrieved 7 October, 2009 from <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/entertainment/controversy-for-hey-hey-its-saturday-over-jackson-5-skit/story-e6frf96f-1225784042163>
- Ahluwalia, P. and McCarthy, G. (1998). 'Political correctness': Pauline Hanson and The construction of Australian Identity. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 57(3), 79-85.
- Augoustinos, M., Tuffin, K. and Rapley, M. (1999). Genocide or a Failure to Gel? Racism, History and Nationalism in Australian Talk. *Discourse and Society*, 10(3), 351-378.
- Augoustinos, M. and Every, D. (2007). The Language of 'Race' and Prejudice: A Discourse of Denial, Reason and Liberal-Practical Politics. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 26(2), 123-141.
- Balibar, E. (1991). Is there a 'neo-racism?'. In E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (pp.17-28). London: Verso.
- Billig, M. (2001). Humour and Hatred: The Racist Jokes of the Klu Klux Klan. *Discourse and Society*, 12(3), 267-289.
- Bolt, A. (2009, October 8). Not Racist, But Dumb. *Herald Sun*. Retrieved 15 February, 2011 from [http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/not\\_racist\\_but\\_dumb](http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/not_racist_but_dumb)
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analyses in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101
- Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Pantheon.
- Gilbert, H. (2003). Black and White and Re(a)d all Over Again: Indigenous Minstrelsy in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Theatre. *Theatre Journal*, 55(4), 679-698.
- Gubar, S. (1997). *Race Changes: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hage, G. (1998). *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*. Australia: Pluto Press.

- Hey Hey it's Saturday in Red Faces Racist Row. (2009, October 8). *News.com.au*. Retrieved 8 October, 2009 from <http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/television/hey-hey-its-saturday-in-red-faces-racist-row/comments-e6frfmyi-1225784048432>
- Hey Hey Upoar. (2009, October 8). *The Age*. Retrieved 8 October, 2009 from [http://blogs.theage.com.au/yoursay/archives/2009/10/hey\\_hey\\_upoar.html?page=fullpage#comments](http://blogs.theage.com.au/yoursay/archives/2009/10/hey_hey_upoar.html?page=fullpage#comments)
- Hyde, Marina. (2009, October 7). Harry Connick Jr Weirdly Unimpressed by Australia's Blackface Jackson 5. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 7 October, 2009, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/lostinshowbiz/2009/oct/07/harry-connick-jr-blackface-jackson-jive>
- Johnson, C. (2000). *Governing Change: Keating to Howard*. St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press.
- Johnson, S. and Suhr, S. (2003). From 'Political Correctness' to 'Politische Korrektheit': Discourses of 'PC' in the German Newspaper, *Die Welt. Discourse and Society*, 14(1), 49-68.
- Kyles, K. (2009, 7 October). Australian Blackface Performers Need a Gut Punch. *The Kyles Files Blog*. Retrieved 15 February 2011, from <http://www.chicagonow.com/blogs/kyles-files/2009/10/australian-blackface-performers-need-a-gut-punch.html>
- LeCouteur, A. and Augoustinos, M. (2001). Apologising to the Stolen Generations: Argument, Rhetoric and Identity in Public Reasoning. *Australian Psychologist*, 36(1), 51-61.
- Liu, J. and Mills, D. (2006). Modern Racism and Neo-liberal Globalization: The Discourses of Plausible Deniability and their Multiple Functions. *Journal of community and applied social psychology*, 16(2), 83-99.
- Lott, E. (1992). Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy. *Representations*, 39(1), 23-50.
- McConahay, J. B. (1986). Modern Racism, Ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale. In J. F. Dovidio and S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism*, (pp. 92-125). New York: Academic Press.
- Millar, Julia. (2009, 9 October). Gillard sticks up for Hey Hey skit. *ABC News*. Retrieved 9 October, 2009, from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/09/2709039.htm>
- Mitchell, Peter. (2009, 9 October). US talk-show weighs in on Hey Hey 'black face' skit. *The National Indigenous Times*. Retrieved 9 October, 2009, from <http://www.nit.com.au/breakingnews/story.aspx?id=18772>
- Molitorisz, S. and Steffens, M. (2009, 10 October). Hey Hey, ABC, Deny Skit is Racist. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved 10 December, 2010, from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/entertainment/tv--radio/hey-hey-abc-denies-skit-is-racist/2009/10/09/1255019613342.html>
- Rainbird, M. (2004). Humour, Multiculturalism and 'Political Correctness'. Paper presented at the conference of the *Australasian Political Studies Association*, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia.
- Readers says Hey Hey Jackson Jive skit 'not racist' (2009, 8 October). *News.com.au*. Retrieved 8 October, 2009, from <http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/television/readers-says-hey-heys-jackson-jive-skit-not-racist/story-e6frfmyi-1225784415621>

- Riggs, D.W. (2006). Psychology and Anti-Racism: Understanding the Melancholic White Subject. In *Bridging the Tasman: Proceedings of the 2006 Joint Conference of the APS and NZPsS* (pp. 350-354). Melbourne, Australia: Australian Psychological Society.
- Riggs, D.W. (2009). Poppadoms, Princesses and Privilege: (Neo)Colonial Racism in the Celebrity Big Brother Household. In R. Clarke (Ed.), *Celebrity Colonialism: Fame, Power and Representation in Colonial and Postcolonial Cultures* (pp. 209-224). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Saxton, A. (1975). Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology. *American Quarterly*, 27(1), 3-28.
- Saxton, A. (2004). Whiteness and Reconciliation: A Discursive Analysis. *Australian Psychologist*, 39(1), 14-23.
- Simmons, K. and LeCouteur, A. (2008). Modern Racism in the Media: Constructions of 'the Possibility of Change' in Accounts of Two Australian 'Riots'. *Discourse and Society*, 19(5), 667-687.
- Stratton, J. (1998). *Race Daze: Australia in Identity Crisis*. Sydney, Australia: Pluto Press.
- Strausbaugh, J. (2007). *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult and Imitation in American Popular Culture*. New York: Penguin.
- Topsfield, J. and Rood, D. (2007, 4 October). Coalition accused of race politics. *The Age*. Retrieved 25 February, 2010, from <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/coalition-accused-of-race-politics/2007/10/03/1191091193835.html>
- van Dijk, T. (1993). Denying Racism: Elite Discourse and Racism. In J. Solomos and J. Wren (Eds.), *Racism and Migration in Western Europe* (pp.179-193). Oxford: Berg.
- Wetherell, M. and Potter, J. (1992). *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Wark, M. (1997). *The Virtual Republic: Australia's Culture Wars of the 1990s*. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

# **MEDIATING DIASPORA, IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH MYRIA GEORGIU**

**SANDY WATSON  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA**

Myria Georgiou is noted for her influential and longstanding theorisation on diaspora, media and identity, including the first mapping of diasporic media in the European Union, together with Roger Silverstone. She has also authored a significant number of books covering areas such as transnationalism and diasporic media (2007a; 2007b; 2006), national identity and ethnicity (2008b; 2006), media and urban life (2008a); and media and identity, including ethnicity and race (2010; 2009).

Issues of diasporic identity and citizenship have occupied a central position in Georgiou's work. She argues persuasively that new media technologies and diasporic media contribute to the displacement of imagined belonging away from the national space towards that of the transnational (2008a). Georgiou articulates the growing challenges presented to the nation-state's authority and political and cultural centrality as a result of the combination of growth in migration and proliferation of new media technologies. Diasporic media play a significant role in this context, she argues, as they enable "virtual everyday mediated travel" and strengthening of transnational connections (2008a, pp. 225-227). Georgiou's theorisation of the shifting centrality of national versus transnational imaginary can also be seen in her recent elucidation of the need for new methodological frameworks that challenge the predominance of the nation as an analytical starting point and instead responding to social changes associated with growing urbanisation, intense mediation and diversification of media cultures (2007b).

The relationship between media and representations of race and ethnicity has also been prominent in Georgiou's work, including a continued focus on the role diasporic and new media play in destabilising hegemonic and stereotypical representations of ethnic minorities (2008; 2006). Recently she has focused on the representation of minorities in media production and content within the British mainstream press (Georgiou 2010; Georgiou and Joo 2009). This is contextualised against Britain's overall political and social history, including discursive shifts from those of anti-racism and multiculturalism followed by the post-9/11 departure from policies emphasising diversity to those valorising social cohesion. Whilst decreases in racist or stereotypical representations are evident, Georgiou outlines a dichotomy between the general under-representation of minorities and their disproportionate

inclusion in stories associated with crime and terrorism. Georgiou has further examined the relationship between stereotypes and the national imagining in cultural events such as the Eurovision Song Competition, where she argues that stereotypes functioned as tools for making sense of cultural (and potentially political) difference, while reproducing perceptions of national superiority and identity (2008b).

Georgiou grew up in Cyprus and began her career as a journalist in Athens. She is currently teaching in the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics (LSE), where she also undertook her PhD under the guidance of Roger Silverstone. Before joining LSE, Georgiou was a Senior Lecturer in International Communications and Director of Postgraduate Taught Studies at ICS, University of Leeds (2003-2009). She is extensively published and a regular media commentator on issues to do with media, diaspora, ethnicity and cosmopolitanism. In this interview, Georgiou traces her own personal trajectory in researching the intersections between media, diaspora, urban life and identity, and specifically race and ethnicity

Georgiou grew up in Cyprus and began her career as a journalist in Athens. She is currently teaching in the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics (LSE), where she also undertook her PhD under the guidance of Roger Silverstone. Before joining LSE, Georgiou was a Senior Lecturer in International Communications and Director of Postgraduate Taught Studies at ICS, University of Leeds (2003-2009). She is extensively published and a regular media commentator on issues to do with media, diaspora, ethnicity and cosmopolitanism. In this interview, Georgiou traces her own personal trajectory in researching the intersections between media, diaspora, urban life and identity, and specifically race and ethnicity.

**PLATFORM:** You began your career in journalism in Athens, working at various times for the BBC World Service, Greek press, and Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation. How have your own personal experience and journalistic grounding shaped your insights into the transformations in media and media cultures occurring in tandem with transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and globalisation?

**Myria Georgiou:** My intellectual journey has, as with most of us, its roots in my own life journey as an individual, a traveller and a professional. Being brought up in Cyprus, a country still divided as a result of ethnic conflict and regional imperial struggles, has put its initial mark on me. It was not until I visited London as an adult that I met a Turkish Cypriot and this in itself was a key moment in my own understanding of my identity and the processes of identity construction more generally. I grew up with representations of Turkish Cypriots as ‘faceless Others’ who lived behind the dividing line between the northern and the southern parts of Cyprus. A sense of claustrophobia when growing up in a small island, which is also divided and militarised, resulted in my first migration journey to Greece. In Athens, I started my career as a journalist, while at the same time studying sociology. Journalism, a profession I dreamed of since I was a child, provided me with invaluable – but also real and beyond romanticism – insights of the media world. As the journey of my

early adulthood though was not only one of a journalist but also one of a sociologist, this hybrid experience was decisive for my choice to turn to research and the study of the media. When I travelled to conduct my Master's studies in the US and then my PhD studies in the UK, my intellectual journey took a new life. This was a result of my first hand experience of migration and resettlement outside the familiar world that Greece and Cyprus represented. No doubt a privileged migrant, but a migrant nevertheless, in the US and the UK I experienced new challenges to my intellectual journey and to my identity. For the first time, I had to reflect on something I used to take for granted, my 'whiteness'. For the first time I shared a home, a street, a professional environment (at the BBC World Service and at the LSE) with people who I grew up assuming were distant 'Others'. Experiencing migration and resettlement in the 1990's, I, like everyone at this time of intense global change, was also exposed to intense human mobility and the growing hostility in Europe towards migrants and refugees. These experiences and representations of change taking place around me have marked my personal and intellectual choices since.

**PLATFORM: These personal influences have obviously been significant in terms of your research interests (media, identity, diaspora, migration, citizenship etc). Can you speak further about your specific interest in terms of identity and ethnicity?**

**MG:** Yes, as discussed already, my own roots and routes somehow pushed me to this area of research. I have always been intrigued with the power of identity as a discourse which can lead to conflict but also to exclusion and marginalisation within political communities, especially in the context of the nation-state. In the 1990's when my interest in ethnicity and identity initially developed, violent conflicts and genocide associated with ethnicity and with claims for ownership of land and 'pure identities' were tearing apart places like Bosnia and Rwanda. This was also a time when migration appeared as the only way out for many victims of such conflicts. Migration, as associated with hope but also as an experience with its own dynamics, which inevitably challenges the limits of identity, its 'purity' and its rootedness in one place, became an area of great interest to me. Of course, the way this interest developed would not have translated to academic research if it wasn't for the influential work of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy that provided me with a framework for understanding the complex dynamics of identity as associated with power relations in the context of migration and diaspora.

**PLATFORM: You have recently argued that shifts such as transnationalism, globalisation and new media technologies require methodological frameworks which are not predicated on the centrality of the nation, but rather have the capacity to consider issues such as individuality, everyday experience, and transnationalism. In particular, you have advocated for a breaking away from the "oppositional production/consumer" divide which has channelled media analyses into areas of production, audience, or text (Georgiou, 2007b). Can you discuss some of the implications of this for approaching questions of ethnicity and race in media?**

**MG:** There are two points of reference that currently inspire my work in thinking about the changing frameworks of political action and of the changing media and communications world. Firstly, Ulrich Beck's thesis about moving away from methodological nationalism and towards methodological cosmopolitanism (cf. Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Beck and Sznaider, 2010) is central to understanding ethnicity and diaspora both as social scientific concepts but also as concepts associated with experiences of identity and citizenship in culturally diverse societies. Historically, social sciences have reproduced the nation as the 'normal', central and natural category for organising research and interpreting its findings. As a consequence, directly or indirectly our scholarship has been reproducing cultural hierarchies where ethnic groups have remained 'the Other' within (assumed) pre-existing national societies. Reflecting on social scientific biases that reproduce a sense of natural order in positioning national categories (i.e. nation; nation-state; national subjects; national identities) into the core of our research is crucial. Alongside Beck, an important point of reference is Castells' (2009) analysis of mass self-communication. In a similar way to Beck, who invites us to think of the nation not as a taken-for-granted category but as one of the many categories in social sciences, Castells invites us to think of communication not as a binary between mass and self-generated/self-controlled communication. While in our studies of media and communications we often struggle to understand two separate experiences of audiences of the mass media on the one hand, and of user generated content on the other, Castells argues that these different forms of communication merge, especially in digital networked communication. In this way, perhaps it becomes less productive to think about media cultures based on the conventional production/consumption divide and more helpful to consider the different forms of communication as complementing (and sometimes competing with) each other.

**PLATFORM:** One of the items highlighted by your work is that whilst there has been an overall trajectory of improvement in the representation of diversity in the British context from the 1970s on, this is noticeably not the case in relation to issues such as asylum seekers and migration, which tend to draw negative or hostile mainstream media coverage (Georgiou, 2010; Georgiou & Joo, 2009). Given the significant role of the media in mediating issues of citizenship and representation, can you elaborate further on the interplay between media, current policies of integration and social cohesion, and representations of race and ethnicity (Karim, 2006).

**MG:** We currently see a new rise of xenophobia in many countries of the global north. We get to know about it - and we get used to - through three main processes. First, it is often revealed in electoral results, but also taken on by governments in their development of increasingly restrictive policies associated with the 'management of diversity', 'social cohesion' and border control. Thirdly, and more persistently, we know about it through the media. We don't only see stories about xenophobia in the media though. We also see xenophobic discourses persistently constructed in a section of the populist conservative media. And alongside this apparent xenophobia that only a minority of the media embrace, we also see a normalisation of nationalist discourses across a range of media outlets. This perhaps is the most interesting and the most concerning issue in relation to the representation of diversity in the media and its

relevance for debates in policy and the public sphere. As regularly a diverse body of the media reproduces banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), important questions are yet again raised about the role media play in restricting the diversification of public discourses on cultural diversity and migration.

While arguments about the social responsibility of the media are currently unfashionable, they are worth revisiting, especially at times of new social tensions associated with the global economic crisis. At the same time, it is worth noting the cases of good practice and new forms of representation of cultural diversity in the media. These sometimes appear in popular programmes, such as in representation of minorities' everyday life in reality shows or investigative journalism focussing on the realities of refugees' everyday life in detention centres.

**PLATFORM: You are also Chair of the Ethnicity and Race in Communications (ERIC) Division of the International Communication Association (ICA). Can you talk further about your role and that of ERIC, including the influences and themes becoming visible in the work of members of ERIC?**

**MG:** The International Communication Association (ICA) is an international scholarly organisation. Research associated with ERIC and its membership reflects the international orientation and membership of ICA. As such, ERIC represents the enormous richness and diversity of communication scholarship in the areas of ethnicity, race, transnationalism and diaspora. This scholarship, which has been historically located in communication studies, initially developed in the US, has now expanded and taken various reincarnations within different academic traditions. The intellectual and cultural diversity of ERIC's membership makes it a fascinating intellectual environment where all members and participants in its conference panels are constantly challenged by the richness of conceptual and empirical research on ethnicity, race, migration, diaspora. While we all share common interests in this diverse area of study, our starting point and conclusions are often different. Yet, the space of dialogue and interaction that takes place both during the panels organised by ERIC and during less formal networking activities is invaluable. Some of the most cutting edge research in communication research on race, ethnicity, migration and diaspora is presented in ERIC's panels. Some of this work includes empirical projects on representations of Blackness after the Obama election, shifting patterns in media consumption among transnational audiences, the role of media in shaping the cultural fabric of cities in the global north and global south, as well as conceptual interrogations on the intersectionality of race, gender, class, or on the relevance of diasporic identities in understanding current challenges to systems of national citizenship.

## REFERENCES

- Beck, U. and Sznaider, N. (2010). Unpacking cosmopolitanism for the social sciences: a research agenda. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 61(Supplement S1), 381-403.
- Beck, U. and Sznaider, N. (2006). Unpacking cosmopolitanism for the social sciences: a research agenda. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 57(1), 1-23.

- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage Publications.
- Castells, M. (2009). *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Georgiou, M. (2010). Media representations of diversity: The power of the mediated image. In A. Bloch & J. Solomos (Eds.), *Race and Ethnicity in the 21st Century* (pp. 166-185). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- (2008a). Urban Encounters: Juxtapositions of Difference and the Communicative Interface of Global Cities, *International Communication Gazette* 70(3-4): 223-235
- (2008b). In the end, Germany will always resort to hot pants: watching Europe singing, constructing the stereotype. *Popular Communication*, 6(3), 141-154.
- (2007b). Transnational crossroads for media and diaspora: three challenges for research. In M. Georgiou, O. Guedes-Bailey & R. Harindranath (Eds.), *Transnational lives and the media: Reimagining Diasporas*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- (2006). *Diaspora, Identity and the Media: Diasporic Transnationalism and Mediated Spatialities*. New York: Hampton Press.
- Georgiou, M., O. Guedes-Bailey and R. Harindranath (co-editors). (2007a). *Transnational Lives and the Media: Reimagining Diasporas*. Basingstoke: Palgrave
- Georgiou, M., and Joo, J.-W. (2009). Representing difference in the British media. In C. Frachon (Ed.), *Media and Cultural Diversity in Europe and North America* (pp. 60-72). Paris: Karthala.
- Karim, K. (2006). Nation and diaspora: rethinking multiculturalism in a transnational context. *International journal of media and cultural politics*, 2(3), 267-282.

BOOK REVIEW: *NEWSGAMES:  
JOURNALISM AT PLAY* (IAN BOGOST,  
SIMON FERRARI AND BOBBY  
SCHWEIZER, 2010)

DANIEL GOLDING  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

REVIEW

As videogames continue to inexorably shed the popular cultural stereotype of the medium for spotty teenagers, several divisions have opened up in both the videogame academe and the creative industry. Most of all, these divisions are centred on the possibilities for the future of the medium as it expands: new social functions, new uses, and new audiences. While *Newsgames: Journalism at Play* (Bogost, Ferrari, and Schweizer, 2010) only operates on the periphery of these issues, it nevertheless arrives at an illustrative juncture. While drawing a rigid dichotomy would be simplistic at best, it is nonetheless reasonable to sketch out two related, contemporary threads of thought for the future of videogames. On one side of the coin we can see recent works (McGonigal, 2011; Ederly and Mollick, 2009) that advocate the adaptation of videogames to benefit reality – in other words, videogames for meaningful external change. On the other side of the coin sits *Newsgames*, which advocates videogames that reflect on and encapsulate reality – in other words, videogames with meaningful content and structures. Indeed, it is *Newsgames*' comparatively modest aims that make it one of the more satisfying videogame theory publications of recent times.

At its heart, *Newsgames* contains a simple problem: how might videogames be used for journalism? For most readers, even those already grounded in videogame studies, this is an unusual question. Though there have previously been some brief explorations of the newsgame format (Sicart, 2008; Treanor and Mateas, 2009), Bogost, Ferrari and Schweizer are able to effectively leverage the unfamiliar territory to present a convincing and comprehensive overview. Despite its brevity (181 pages), *Newsgames* mounts a persuasive argument for the potential usefulness of the

videogame for journalistic applications. And, while not without its shortcomings, *Newsgames* also provides a satisfying survey of the academic and theoretical foundations in which the authors have couched their work.

Essentially, *Newsgames* argues that journalism is a practice tied to many platforms, each with strengths and disadvantages, and that as it evolves, journalism must “embrace new modes of thinking about news in addition to new modes of production” (2010, p. 10). Videogames, the authors suggest, contain unique qualities that make them ideal as a complementary platform for journalism. These qualities are largely understood in *Newsgames* via the videogame’s procedural and systemic strengths. Therefore, the procedural mode of videogame analysis serves as a foundation for much of *Newsgames*. Procedurality has often found its centre at Georgia Tech, where all three authors of *Newsgames* are based. Indeed, it has been at its most potent in the hands of Bogost, who popularised procedural rhetoric as a framework for videogame analysis in *Persuasive Games* (Bogost, 2007); and Ferrari, who further explored the concept in his Masters thesis (Ferrari, 2010). In *Newsgames*, procedural analysis finds its most useful application thus far. By focussing on the systemic expressiveness of newsgames, Bogost, Ferrari and Schweizer convincingly illustrate that “games simulate how things work by constructing models that people can interact with” (2010, p. 6).

The multiple typologies of newsgames suggested by the authors shape the structure of *Newsgames*, with numerous fruitful digressions. This allows *Newsgames* to draw upon a wide variety of depth and quality when discussing the possibilities of newsgames: from the simple and occasionally trite “tabloid games” like *So You Think You Can Drive, Mel?* (Game Show Network, 2006); to more complex “infographic games” such as *Budget Hero* (American Public Media, 2008); to provocative “documentary games” like *JFK Reloaded* (Traffic Games, 2004). The strengths of such an approach are that it allows *Newsgames* ample room to discuss the merits and potential of each mode of newsgame, and ultimately sketches a multiplicity of potential implementations familiar to journalism: comment, editorial, humour, illustration, reportage, and insight. *Newsgames* also benefits from the inclusion of several interesting detours, and exhibits a good eye for the history of both journalism and videogames (a brief overview of the history of the crossword puzzle is particularly welcome).

However, *Newsgames*’ reliance on examples is also its most glaring weakness, especially when most newsgames so clearly indicate the infancy of the genre. Some newsgames featured in the book are simply too naïve to alone convey the authors’ understanding of the potentials of the genre, yet are sometimes offered without comment. And, though many of the major arguments in *Newsgames* are persuasively made by example, occasionally the example is allowed to overtake the larger point being made by the authors. The chapter on infographic games, for example, goes to great lengths in describing the workings of a number of infographic newsgames and infographics in general, yet offers only a few passing thoughts on what it may mean to engage with data in such a manner. *Newsgames* may have therefore benefited from a few more instances of deep theoretical discussion.

The practical possibilities of newsgames are taken very seriously by the authors, however, and it is likely that the newsgame practitioner (or potential practitioner) may gain more from the book than the academic reader. Bogost, via his Persuasive Games studio, has much first-hand experience in the creation of newsgames, and it is the account of his dealings with the *New York Times* that is simultaneously the most engaging and sobering component of the book. Though Persuasive Games was engaged by the *New York Times* for six monthly newsgames for its website, only two were ever published, with the *Times*' editorial desk eventually failing to communicate at all with Persuasive Games. While the authors view the incident forgivingly – “Rather than wickedness or deceit, organizational politics are likely to blame” (2010, p. 176) – it nonetheless illustrates the daunting practical problems facing the widespread adoption of newsgames.

Ultimately, however, it is scope that is almost certainly *Newsgames*' most commendable trait. Although it is broad in its examination of the topic at hand, *Newsgames* is willing to confine its sights to a narrowly defined topic. In the context of over a decade of works intended as “foundational” for videogame studies, *Newsgames* proves that there is room for good scholarly work in building and improving upon those foundations. As with Bogost's *Racing the Beam*, an exploration of the Atari VCS (Bogost and Montfort, 2009), *Newsgames* represents a genuine attempt to deepen – and not simply reshape – the body of knowledge of videogame studies. It is important work that videogame studies should be doing more of.

## REFERENCES

- American Public Media. (2008). *Budget Hero*. Retrieved 8 March, 2011 from [http://marketplace.publicradio.org/features/budget\\_hero](http://marketplace.publicradio.org/features/budget_hero)
- Bogost, I. (2007). *Persuasive Games: The Expressive Power of Videogames*. Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press.
- Bogost, I., and Montfort, N. (2009). *Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System*. Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press.
- Bogost, I., Ferrari, S., and Schweizer, B. (2010). *Newsgames: Journalism at Play*. Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press.
- Edery, D., and Mollick, E. (2009). *Changing the Game: How Video Games Are Transforming the Future of Business*. New Jersey: FT Press.
- Ferrari, S. (2010). *The Judgement of Procedural Rhetoric*. Masters Thesis, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA.
- Game Show Network. (2006). *So You Think You Can Drive, Mel?* Retrieved 8 March, 2011 from <http://www.eatmygames.com/gameload.asp?ID=drivemel>
- McGonigal, J. (2011). *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better And How They Can Change The World*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Sicart, M. (2008). "Newsgames: Theory and Design." Paper presented at the International Conference on Entertainment Computing, Pittsburg, P.A.
- Traffic Games. (2004). *JFK Reloaded*.
- Treanor, M., and Mateas, M. (2009). Newsgames: Procedural Rhetoric Meets Political Cartoons. *Proceedings of the Digital Games Research Association Conference*. Uxbridge: Brunel University.

# **PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication**

## **Volume 3 Issue 1 Editorial Team**

### **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Sandy Watson

### **DEPUTY EDITOR & PEER-REVIEW COORDINATOR**

Luke van Ryn

### **ASSOCIATE EDITORS**

Jesse Hearn-Branaman, Sebastian Kubitschko, Dale Leorke

### **COPY EDITORS**

Amira Firdaus and Sebastian Kubitschko

### **WEBSITE, DESIGN & CREATIVE EDITORS**

Marcos Dias and James Donald

### **COPYRIGHT MANAGER & EXTERNAL LIAISON**

Blaise Murphet

### **JOURNAL MANAGERS**

Maria Shi and Diana Bayly

### **COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER**

Caroline Zielinski

### **PUBLISHER**

School of Culture and Communication, University of  
Melbourne, Australia