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

By Melissa Wright, University of Adelaide, Australia

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

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

2 It has also been suggested that an integrated view of racism that focuses on its complex relationship with hierarchies of gender and class, and other such identity constructions, is vital to understanding the differing ways in which racist structures and discourses perpetuate inequalities and resulting positions of relative oppression and privilege. (Hoagland; Schloesser) Hage suggests that rather than ignoring the complex ways in which whiteness, if viewed as cultural capital, is variously distributed amongst a range of identity positions (i.e. gender, class, sexuality and ability), it is important to examine the differing

investments that people will hold in whiteness as a dominant cultural signifier. "Whiteness," from this understanding, is thus not solely the property of those identified as having white skin – it circulates as a form of cultural capital that while indeed primarily privileging those men identified as white, middle-class, heterosexual and able-bodied, nonetheless accords considerable privilege to a much wider range of individuals on the basis of their willingness, desire, or otherwise to appropriate particular social norms that serve to enshrine whiteness. As such is it important to examine how certain dominant perspectives of the world which are enshrined in social institutions regulate how we understand ourselves and the people we relate to. Burman in particular directs our attention to the way intersectional raced, classed and gendered discourses may be deployed in the service of nation and citizenship in a manner which primarily works to privilege "whiteness."

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

"Whiteness" and race privilege

4 Researchers are increasingly acknowledging the importance of addressing the underlying and resultant positions of relative privilege and oppression that acts of racism directly correspond to. Frankenberg is one such theorist who draws attention to the structural advantage, or racial privilege, which is linked to "whiteness" as an identity position. As indicated in the introduction, whilst "whiteness" is typically taken as referring to people identified as "white-skinned", an understanding of whiteness as "cultural capital" extends our focus to the benefits that a wide range of people not directly identified by the category "white" may be said to accrue. Thus, as Frankenberg aptly summarises: whiteness is "an

economic and political category maintained over time by a changing set of exclusionary practices" (11). Frankenberg also argues that whiteness is often defined by what it is *not*, and thus defined in relation to the boundaries which mark cultural groups as "racial others."

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

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

Maintaining Racial Privilege

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

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

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

construct intelligible identities for themselves *within* racial discourses, and how this leads to the reification of particular racial identities.

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

Contemporary Intersections of Race and Gender

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

effectively excluding non-white women from the category of universal womanliness, and consequently from identifying as civilized beings. "Racial patriarchy" thus describes an interaction between racial and gender systems of oppression, and the effective positioning of people of different gender, race, culture and class in a hierarchy "seen to be indicative of political worth or value" (13).

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

13 Examples such as these clearly demonstrate how ineffectual a single feminist movement, based primarily on knowledge about white middle-class women's lives, is in addressing the inequalities faced by women in differing subject positions, as crosscut by race, class and sexuality. The invisibility of whiteness as a racial category, and the imagined homogeneity of white women as representing the category "woman" results in a norm to which the salient differences of marginalised racial groups are measured against (Frankenberg). By viewing white middle-class women as the "universal woman," culturally or racially marginalised women are simultaneously silenced and marked as the "other". Similarly, "other" ethic groups are frequently treated as homogenous and come to be represented by men, rather than being viewed as cross-cut by gender and class (Moreton-Robinson). The intersectional relationship between race, class and gender is evident in various discursive justifications, such as the way in which the oppressed positioning of women (in relation to men) and of non-white ethnic groups is frequently "naturalised" by their class and

economic position, whereby discourses around biological difference (such as the female role of child-bearer and mother) and of cultural difference (such as stereotypes of the "idle" black worker) are used to naturalise these class differences (Anthias & Yuval-Davis). On the other hand, Blauner suggests that as prejudicial class attitudes are generally more acceptable, racist attitudes are sometimes disguised as class-based criticisms. This is particularly damaging as non-white individuals are disproportionately clustered within the lower classes. (Fenton) The use of "tokenism," whereby successful non-white individuals who have "made it" are pointed to as examples of societal equality and opportunity, is similarly used as justification of race and/or class oppression (Russell).

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

"Girls being girls" in *Celebrity Big Brother*

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

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

housemates were examined with particular attention paid to the linguistic and discursive devices which were actively used to position people.

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

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

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

18 Goody's behaviour is similarly constructed as not intentionally violent towards Shetty, with justifications such as "Jade is Jade" and she "has her set of beliefs and she's acting on them." While her treatment of Shetty is acknowledged to be "unfair," Watkins and Jackson

partially justify her actions by implying that Goody has no control over her beliefs and behaviour, which are a presented as resulting from who she is, rather than a conscious choice. Goody's behaviour is furthermore constructed as unique to her as an individual, rather than having any link to the wider social environment, which is evident when Watkins says "I've never witnessed anything like this before." According to them, these kinds of beliefs and behaviours are somehow intrinsic to the person, rather than the society they live in, a common rhetoric identified by Van Dijk which works to deny the existence of underlying racism.

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

> Jackson: hmm. . . hmm. You hear of um. . . situations where girls are kind of envious of each other, and jealous, and they um. . . sort of all of a sudden just speak their mind. And they just –
> Watkins: Hormones are everywhere.
> Jackson: Yeah. This place could have been full of guys and we all would have gotten along.

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

20 By suggesting that the particular events or issues between the three British girls and Shetty would never have happened in a houseful of men, Watkins and Jackson effectively relegate the events as resulting solely from the women's gender, rather than also being culturally based. This raises the question as to whether Shetty would have been targeted by Goody, O'Meara and Lloyd had she been male, rather than a self-possessed female held in

relatively high esteem within her own country, again drawing attention to the various ways in which race, class and gender are uniquely crosscut and articulated by each other .(Anderson & Collins; Burman) While intersecting discourses of race and gender appear at play within the interactions between the women, these are rendered invisible through a normative discourse of "girls being girls" within the house.

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

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

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

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

> Lloyd: Shilpa's [Shetty] not a bad person. She means well. But she is very controlling. Very controlling. I just don't like getting told what to do. Ever. That just really pisses me off. But she does mean well.
> O'Meara: Yeah she does. It's just completely different cultures and different ways of living and mannerisms. I mean we're eleven strangers thrown in a really close house. It's a good size but it's small for the amount of people – you can't get away ever. . .

In their discussion, Lloyd and O'Meara work up two concurrent versions of Shetty; firstly, as a well-meaning person, and secondly as a controlling and non-genuine person. Lloyd's construction of Shetty as someone who "means well" effectively works to portray Lloyd as intuitive and understanding of Shetty's character, and also works to deny any malevolent intent in her words to follow. Her statement that Shetty is "controlling" is softened by preceding and subsequent assurances that Shetty "does mean well," which work to lend

credence to the statement that Shetty, indeed, must be controlling and dominating. Constructions of Shetty as "controlling" further lend justification to the dislike of Shetty displayed by the three girls, as though it is merely reactionary — as Lloyd states: no-one likes "getting told what to do." While Lloyd appears to be referring primarily to Shetty's personality, O'Meara suggests that Shetty's "different cultures and different ways of living and mannerisms" are the underlying cause of her domineering behaviour. Thus, while O'Meara is talking about the "different cultures and different ways of living [. . .] [of] eleven strangers," begins her sentence with explicit reference to Shetty ("Yeah she does") and hence constructs this difference as referenced from Shetty – Shetty is the point from which difference is measured.

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

> Lloyd: It's like a big massive celebrity from here going over to India and none of them knowing who she is or whatever. But then again I do think, I don't know sometimes whether Shilpa is being herself or not, but I don't think we'll ever find out. It's just hard. And obviously me, you and Jade are young girls and we have the same sort —
> O'Meara: Yeah, we all live in the same sort of area, go to the same sort of place.
> Lloyd: That's why we just get on. We're not doing it to leave her out or be spiteful or be fuckin' bitches or whatever.

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

24 Once again, a discourse of gender is drawn upon to justify the three British girls' behaviour and views. Their behaviour is justified as not purposeful, but merely resulting from how well they get on as three "young girls" who have similar backgrounds. They are not trying to "leave [Shetty] out or be spiteful or fuckin' bitches," but rather suggest that it is just too difficult to bridge the cultural and geographical gap between themselves and Shetty. This, too, is justified with the assertion that Shetty is possibly not genuine, which would thus make it very difficult (and ultimately unnecessary) to connect with her. Such rhetoric is reminiscent

of Augoustinos and Every's assertion that certain events or attitudes are commonly justified as being reflective of the "real" world or an external "truth," whilst downplaying the role that their own individual subjectivity plays in such constructions. Their (mis)treatment of Shetty is thus constructed as unintentional, and also as unavoidable, due to Shetty's own "controlling" and non-genuine personality.

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

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

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

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

> Goody: She was hairy and they bleached it — I mean and they shaved it.
> Shetty: No they lasered it.
> Goody: Shaved it and then lasered it.
> Shetty: And they shaved it before they lasered it, so which means that –
> O'Meara: It grows back.
> Shetty: It grows back, and I haven't had time to get it lasered. . .
> Lloyd: Do you get stubble?
> Shetty: No. I do have baby hair on my face which looks like. . . bear hair now.
> O'Meara: You're, you're bleaching your whole face off?

Shetty: When you have side burns and. . .you can't not bleach —
O'Meara: That's like a man.
Lloyd: [laughing]
O'Meara: [louder] That's like a man.
Lloyd: I haven't got any bleach – I mean I haven't got any hairs.
Shetty: Thanks for rubbing it in. [Lloyd laughing]
O'Meara: You better rub it in. But I just don't get why you're bleaching your nose?
Shetty: Just, just to make it all look even.

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

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

Goody: I can't believe she does her makeup in the toilet all discreet but walks out with that on her face.
O'Meara: Yeah [Imitating Indian Accent] "And I've got a big hairy face. And I must bleach the hairs off my face".

The final statement by O'Meara is clearly racist, imitating Shetty's Indian accent with ridicule towards Shetty's physical features, clearly linking them to her Indian heritage. Gender and racial categories are both drawn upon here, and as was the case with the white women examined in Schloesser's text, the white woman is constructed as the representation of true femininity, compared to the dark-skinned and hairy Indian woman, who is somehow constructed as less female, and thus potentially somehow less human. The existence of historically contingent ideologies such as the "fair sex" – a term defining only white or "fair" women as real women (Hoagland; Schloesser), are evidently present in modern-day discourses.

Conclusion

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

29 This analysis specifically highlights the complex interaction between race and gender discourses, and resulting positions of privilege or oppression associated with the accumulation (or lack thereof) of "cultural capital" (Hage). The construction of the tense relationship between Shetty and the British "trio" (Goody, O'Meara & Lloyd) as being due to uniquely female styles of interaction, and female attributes, is just one such way in which racist discourses can seemingly subtly emerge through other identity constructions, which could also include class, sexuality or ability. Whilst many variations on this theme were articulated by the housemates (with particular differences noted between male and female accounting of events), they worked to reduce the "racist" intent of the protagonists, and to reduce differences between protagonists to gender effects, effectively minimising cultural or

racialised evocations of difference. Such constructions of "girls being girls" or of a "gendered" form of bullying imply that so-called "racist" actions are accidental and unintentional, reinforcing dominant images of racism as something only present in working-class males rather than as a phenomenon not restricted to a given class or gender, and thus also manifest in mixed-class female-to-female discourses (Ware). Strongly reminiscent of Schloesser's depiction of racial and patriarchal hierarchies was the manner in which the men in the house presumed authority in defining female identities and actions within the house, and in turn, the power that the white women in the house wielded in the construction of Shetty's identity as being outside the bounds of normative (white) femininity.

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

31 Such discursive constructions ("girls being girls") play an instrumental role in the continual maintenance and justification of white race privilege; conferring benefits to those who adhere to or can explain events in a manner consistent with white cultural norms (Frankenberg). Shetty was demonstrably on the outside of these norms from the onset, and was unable or unwilling to engage with the changing and arbitrary "rules" defining inclusion. Rather than acknowledging the subjective nature of white culture within the house, Shetty instead became positioned as the site of "difference," in comparison with the "normal" (white) ways of behaving that were deemed acceptable within the house. Clearly, white culture here was operating as an "unmarked and unnamed" (Frankenberg 1) category, against which Shetty's salient gendered and classed cultural differences were measured. Despite protestations of tolerance and impartiality, "whiteness" was constructed by the British girls as

something desirable and somehow "naturally" better. As discussed by Van Dijk, and Anthias and Yuval-Davis, concurrent discursive constructions such as these work to deny the existence of racism, and thus suggest that any privilege granted to white people is therefore the result of "natural" superiority. In the case of the *Big Brother* house, this "natural" superiority literally referred to having white skin, along with conforming to various "white" cultural norms.

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

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

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