

PGR Seminar

Walking Through Literature: Race, Symbolic Capital & Performativity

@UEL Docklands

Thursday 21 March 2024 (5pm – 7pm)

This first seminar in the series explores the intersection of race within academic literature. It probes into the concept of symbolic capital via examining how identities are racialised and performed for economic imperatives in socio-cultural contexts. The reading interrogates the power dynamics and social constructs that shape these performances, offering a comprehensive understanding of contemporary phenomena. The lecture underscores the importance of acknowledging and challenging prevalent racial mythologies in cultural performative narratives that appear as ‘colourwashed’ artefacts.

Speaker: Jay Dunstan (ACI)



Agenda



Welcome



Biography – Jay Dunstan



Introduction & overview of research



Colourwashing summary – why this matters?



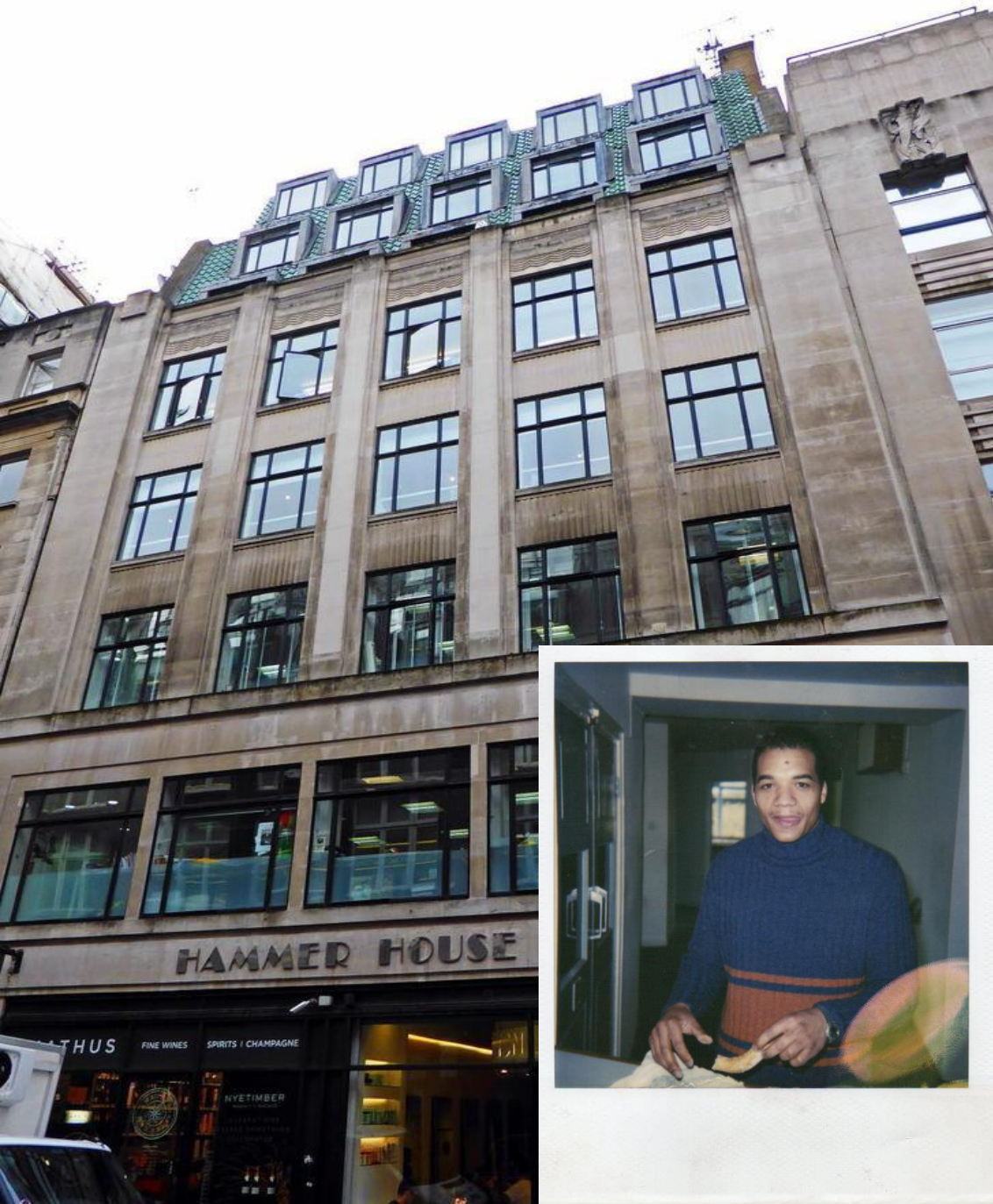
Walking through 'some' of the literature on race – what I have found



Final thoughts



Questions



Cultural industries: entry - 1995 - 1999

Hammer House, Wardour Street, Soho, London.

(Hammer House today. Photo via [renderosity.com](https://www.renderosity.com))



Myself eating Churros with my colleague Chris
(who took the photo) in the basement/technical
facility floor. March 1996, Aged 22.



Biography – snapshot

Worked across the CCI for over 25 years, in post-production facilities houses, as a First Assistant Film Editor, in broadcast television. Delivering advertising commercials.

Subsequently, transitioning from this role to working agency side at one of the UK's largest advertising agencies, delivering above the line (ATL) campaigns to global clients.

Finally, transitioning back to the client-oriented side, as a global manager (marketing), for one of the world's largest engineering corporations.

Introduction – the wider research concern



The research aims to understand, define, and explore the exponential rise in minority representation across mass communications media. The increase is a recent phenomenon and sits in binary opposition to prior conceptualisations of the politics of representation.



The current position is problematical, for this novel representational ‘paradigm’ allows for the negation of questions of equality and their subsumption under the aegis of greater visibility. Put simply, structural inequality is given symbolic capitalised legitimacy by the significant increase in minority representation. Rendering formative issues and questions of equality and inclusion hidden by this phenomenon.



The research develops this critique as a hypothesis and frames it under a new conceptual term – **colourwashing**.

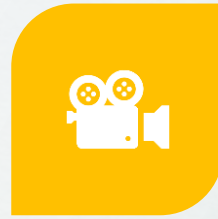
What are the Contemporary Cultural Industries (CCI)?



ADVERTISING,
MARKETING, PR



BROADCASTING



FILM INDUSTRIES



PRINT & ELECTRONIC
PUBLISHING



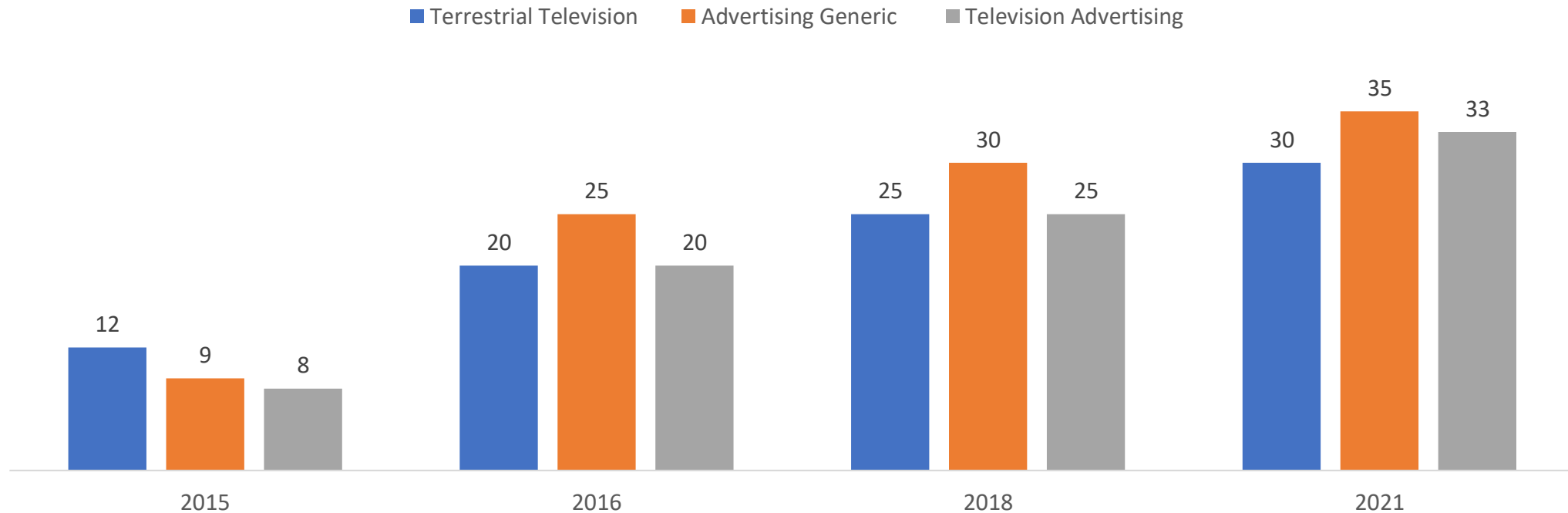
VIDEO & COMPUTER
GAMES

Core Industries

- Each domain with their own dynamical processes. However, these (core) cultural industries interact and interconnect in highly complex ways.

Over representation?

The Representation of Minorities (BAME) Across UK CCI Outputs



Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013) *The Cultural industries*. (3rd Edition) London: Sage Publications.

ITV (2021) 'ITV Diversity Action Plan.' Available at: <https://www.itv.com/presscentre/media-packs/itv-publishes-diversity-acceleration-plan-report> (Accessed: 9 March 2024).

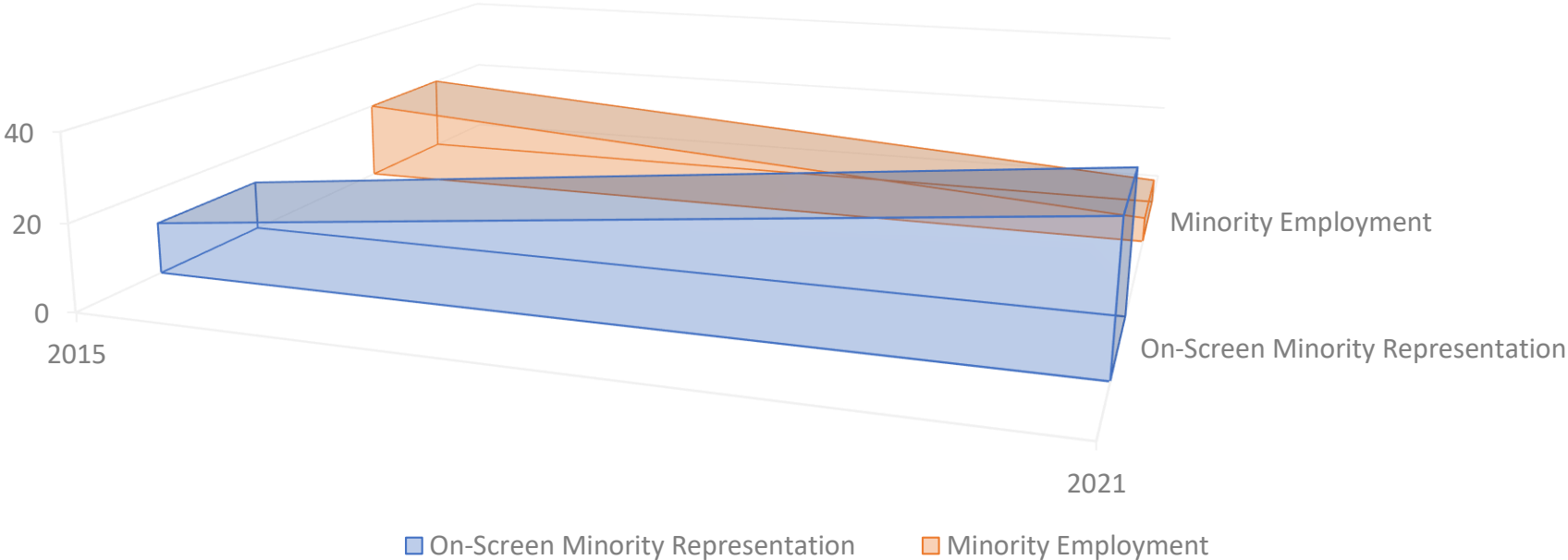
Ohene, A. (June, 2020). 'Why BAME groups should be seen and heard.' *Campaign*. Available at: <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/why-bame-groups-seen-heard/1685846> (Accessed: 28 January 2023).

Lloyds Banking Group (2018) 'Ethnicity in Advertising: Reflecting Modern Britain in 2018?' UK: *Lloyds Banking Group*. Available at: <https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/ethnicity-in-advertising.html> (Accessed: 27 January 2023).

OFCOM (2021) 'Diversity and equal opportunities in television and radio 2019/20: Report on the UK-based broadcasting industry.' Available at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0022/207229/2019-20-report-diversity-equal-opportunities-tv-and-radio.pdf (Accessed: 2 February 2024).

Employment within the CCI for minorities

Minority (BAME) Employment – amalgamation of data

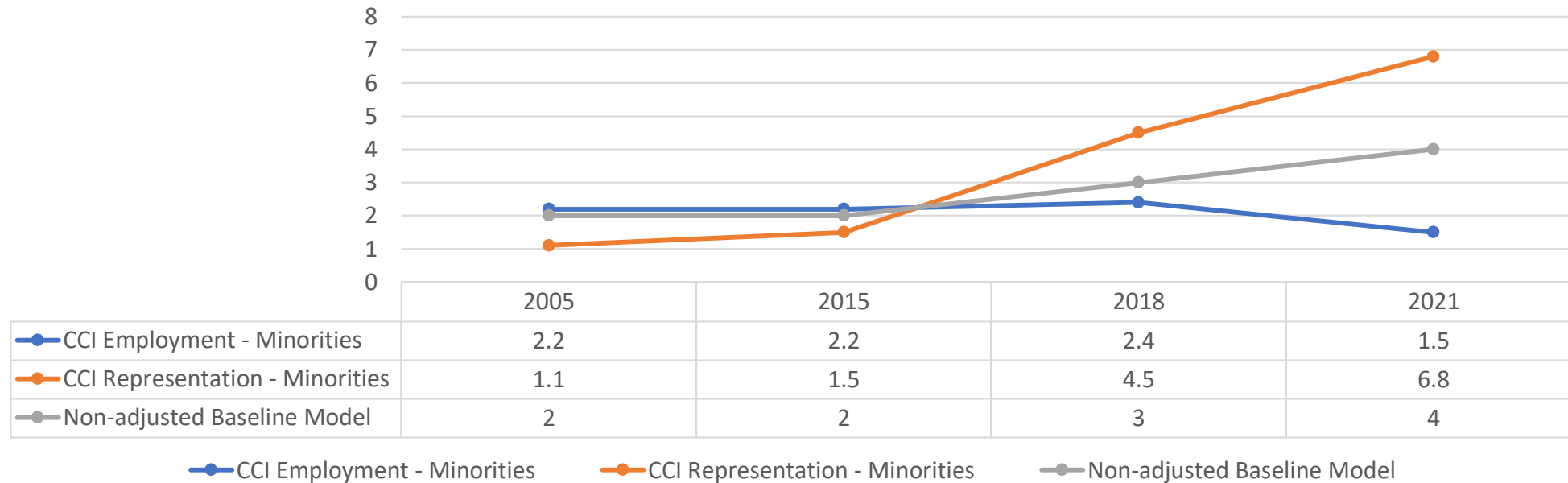


BECTU (2024) 'Bectu calls for government intervention as new research shows UK film and TV industry in crisis.' Available at: <https://bectu.org.uk/news/bectu-calls-for-government-intervention-as-new-research-shows-uk-film-and-tv-industry-in-crisis> (Accessed: 10 March 2024).

The Voice Online (2023) 'BBC all-white on the night.' Available at: <https://www.voice-online.co.uk/news/uk-news/2022/03/11/bbc-all-white-on-the-night/> (Accessed: 3 January 2023).

The representational inflation paradox

Charted Disparity – Employment vs ‘On-Screen Time’ (Percentage Adjusted)



Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013) *The Cultural industries*. (3rd Edition) London: Sage Publications.

ITV (2021) 'ITV Diversity Action Plan.' Available at: <https://www.itv.com/presscentre/media-packs/itv-publishes-diversity-acceleration-plan-report> (Accessed: 9 March 2024).

Ohene, A. (June, 2020). 'Why BAME groups should be seen and heard.' *Campaign*. Available at: <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/why-bame-groups-seen-heard/1685846> (Accessed: 28 January 2023).

Lloyds Banking Group (2018) 'Ethnicity in Advertising: Reflecting Modern Britain in 2018?' UK: *Lloyds Banking Group*. Available at: <https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/ethnicity-in-advertising.html> (Accessed: 27 January 2023).

OFCOM (2021) 'Diversity and equal opportunities in television and radio 2019/20: Report on the UK-based broadcasting industry.' Available at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0022/207229/2019-20-report-diversity-equal-opportunities-tv-and-radio.pdf (Accessed: 2 February 2024).

Rößner, A. & Martin, E. (2023) Ethnic Minorities in Advertising, *Journal of Advertising*, 52(5), pp.774-784, Available at: DOI: [10.1080/00913367.2023.2255247](https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2023.2255247) (Accessed: 01 August 2023).

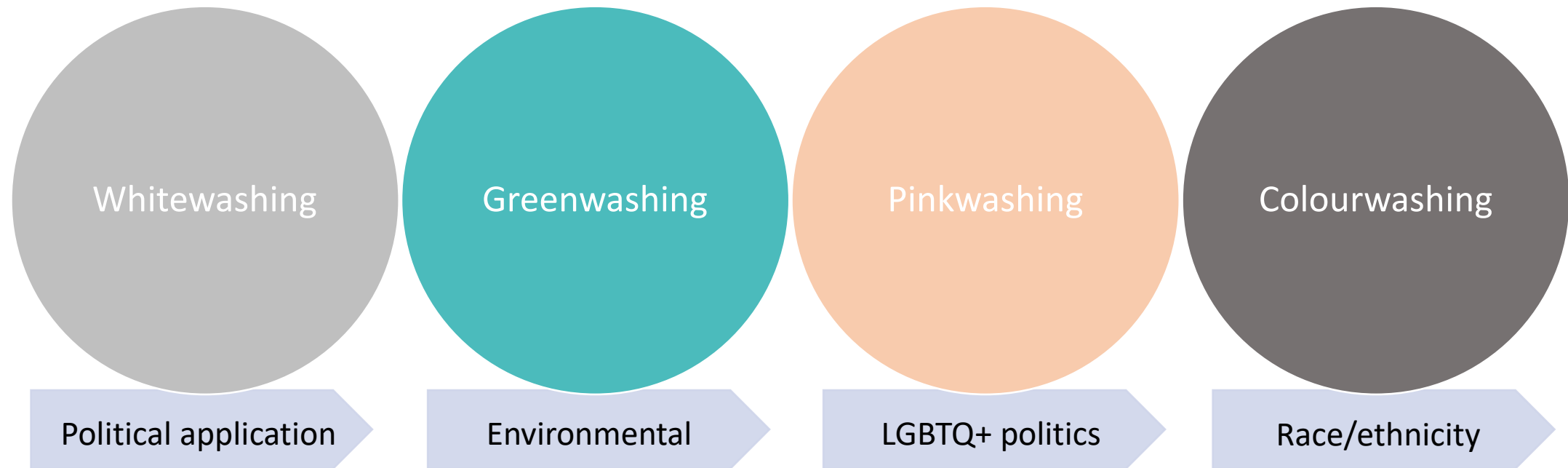
BECTU (2024) 'Bectu calls for government intervention as new research shows UK film and TV industry in crisis.' Available at: <https://bectu.org.uk/news/bectu-calls-for-government-intervention-as-new-research-shows-uk-film-and-tv-industry-in-crisis> (Accessed: 10 March 2024)

What is going on?

The collage features several distinct elements:

- Amazon.co.uk:** A large section at the bottom left showing a promotional banner for "PLAY FOR FREE | 75% OFF UNTIL MONDAY AT 10 AM PACIFIC" and a "Shop new sweats under £35 amazon essentials" advertisement.
- Sainsbury's Bank:** A central advertisement for "Sainsbury's Bank Nectar Offers" with the headline "Ease the squeeze" and a "Find out more" button.
- American Express:** A white box on the right side with the "AMERICAN EXPRESS" logo and the text "Up to £45 Cashback" and "Browse world-class Charge and Credit cards."
- News Articles:** Several smaller snippets of news content, including a BBC article titled "BE MORE WARRIOR" and a snippet about "AISLE SAY I'm known as the one-hour wife after I was married for just 60 minutes".
- Other Ads:** A "Give the gift of Premium Bonds" advertisement on the far right, a "Life Cover + £75 voucher" advertisement at the bottom right, and a "FREE WE PROPN" advertisement on the left.
- Background Elements:** Various images of people, including a man in a blue shirt, a woman blowing a bubble, and a family scene.

Colourwashing?





Research Questions

• **Main Research Questions:**

- Why after sustained and historic under-representation within the UK Contemporary Cultural Industries (CCI), is it now empirically evident that minority communities are 'over-represented' in what were once unrepresentative spaces?
- If diversity within the CCI is currently conceptually underpinned by racial capitalism theory, what are the limitations of this framing, what are the underlying politics?
- How is form and function in terms of representations, narratives and discourses, both created and given wider societal meaning/legitimacy?

• **Field-Work Questions:**

- If the current configuration of the CCI is invested in diversity simply as a 'box ticking' exercise - as economic interests will always take precedence over the moral case for plurality, how might equitable alternatives be envisioned?
- How do aspirants into the CCI make sense of the shifts in representations, to reinterpret what is possible regarding their own career trajectories?
- Are questions of class and ethnicity deterministic or variable in this new iteration of the CCI?

Walking through the literature

PART 1

- Considerations, Framework & Methodology
- Definitions & Terminology
- Mapping Selected Salient Academic Approaches to Race – Broadly
- Problem Background & Knowledge Gap

PART 2

- Precarity
- Technologies of Precarity: Employment, Deprivation and the Poverty Discourse
- Underpinning Colourwashing - Racial Capital
- Prior Positions Informing the Contemporary Commodification of the Race Paradigm

PART 3

- Mass Communications: Representational Considerations I
- Mass Communications: Representational Considerations II (Racialisation)
- CCI, Media Representations – Centrality

PART 4

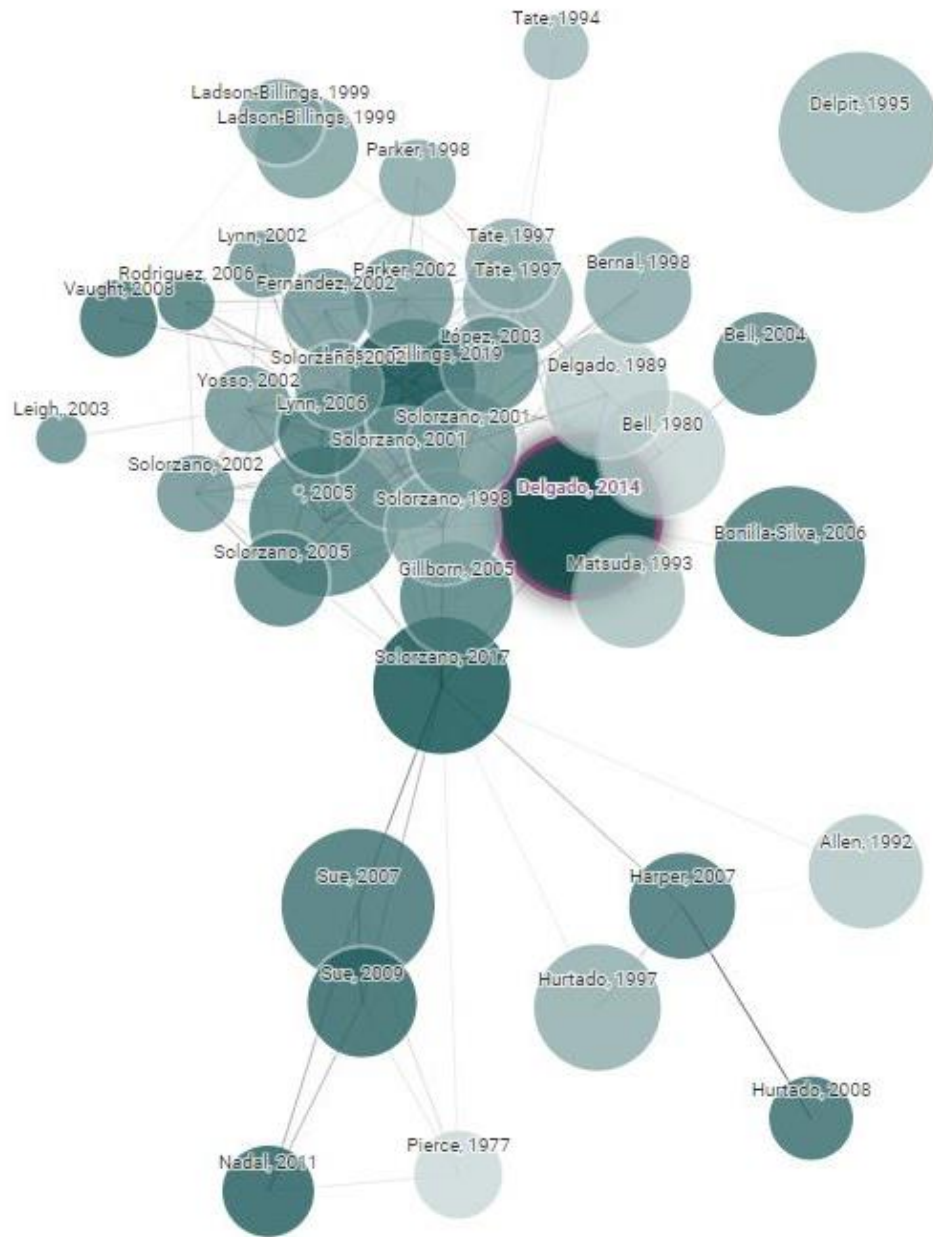
- Mapping a Possible Future: Sustained & Performative Colourwashing

Walking through the literature

PART 2

- Precarity
- Technologies of Precarity: Employment, Deprivation and the Poverty Discourse
- Underpinning Colourwashing - Racial Capital

What was involved?



Source: www.connectedpapers.com/race

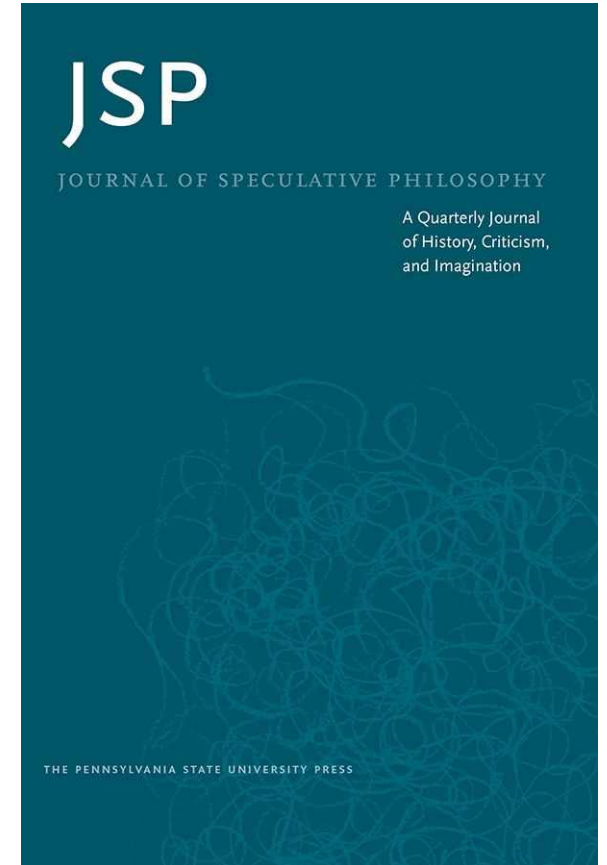
- Over 200 books, articles, journals, papers and items of grey literature were consulted and referenced in order to explore the issues around the increase in the representation of minorities.
- Resulting in 150+ sources cited.
- The literature is clustered within the following domains: **Education** (Reay, 1995), **employment** (Creagan, *et al.*, 2003), **housing** (Howell, & Korver-Glenn, 2018), **income disparity** (Thomas, & Moye, 2015), **locale** (Cort, 2011), **policing/surveillance** (Young, 1997; Muncie, 2009), and **welfare** (Driessen, 1982). Foremost in the context of the thesis, **representations** (van Dijk, 1991; Hall, 1993; Malik, 2002; Campbell, 2017; Saha, 2018; Saha, 2021; Saha & van Lente, 2022).

Walking
through the
literature

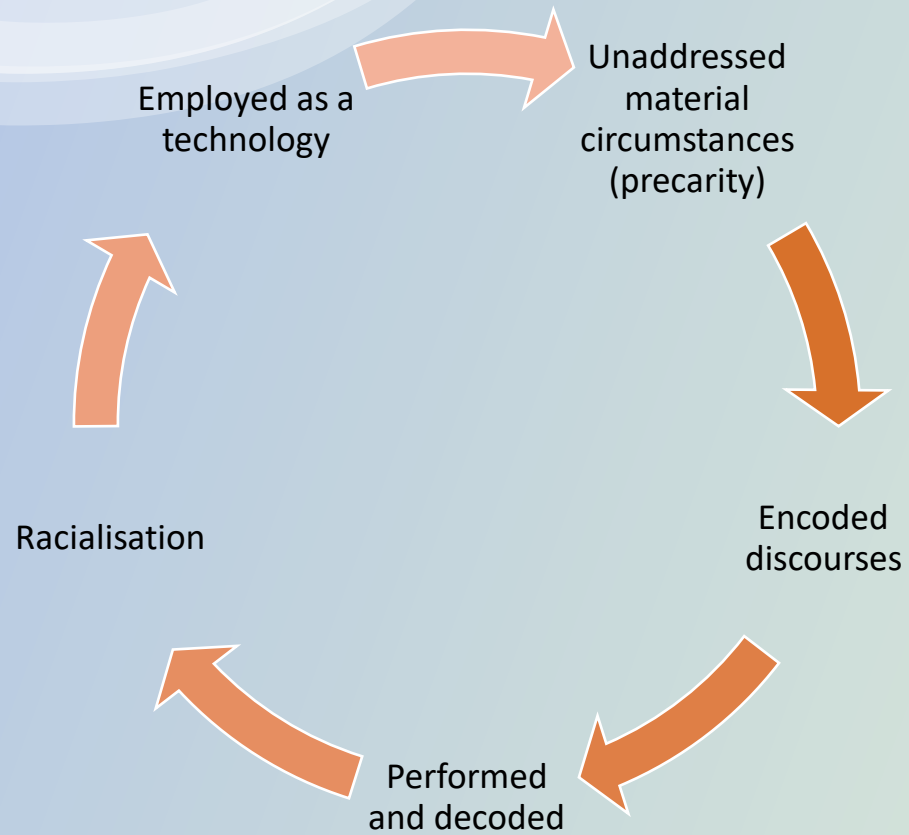
Precarity

Precarity

- Precarity as a reworked critical concept
- Moving to encompass the 'sociality' of life
- Matrices of interdependency
- Unequal distribution
- Foregrounds those noted as 'unworthy'



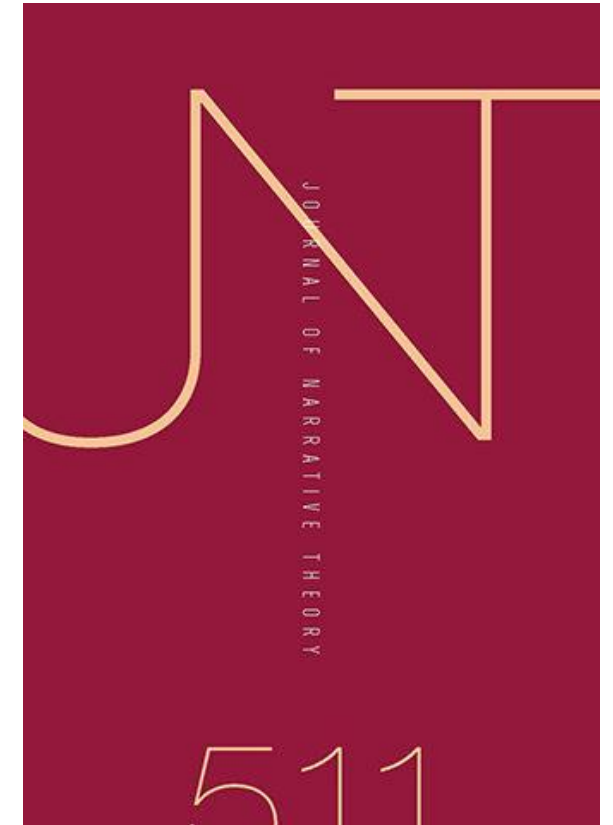
Precarity, the confirming circle



Creates symbolic cultural capital for the CCI to deploy

Case study: Precarity as manifest

- Precarity as applied to the 'Other'
- Regardless of contribution
- The Sword of Damocles is left to hang
- Fungibility of lives
- Lives lived in precarity



Precariousness in action



London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremonial March



'Go Home' vans funded by the UK Government Home Office, circa, 2012/2013

Colourwashing = precarity

- Precarity at a time of 'national celebration'
- Performativity as a socio-cultural action does not negate precarity
- An inverse law

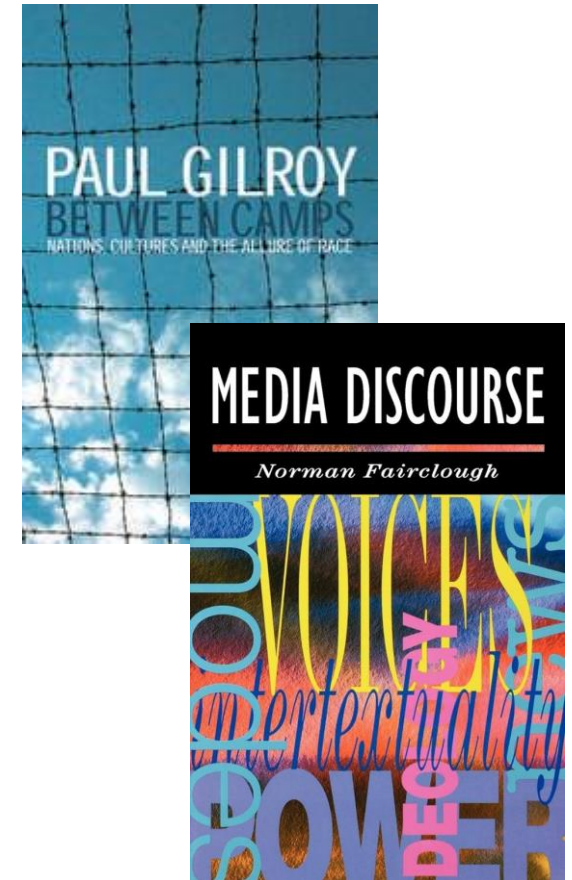


Walking
through the
literature

**Technologies of Precarity: Employment,
Deprivation and the Poverty Discourse**

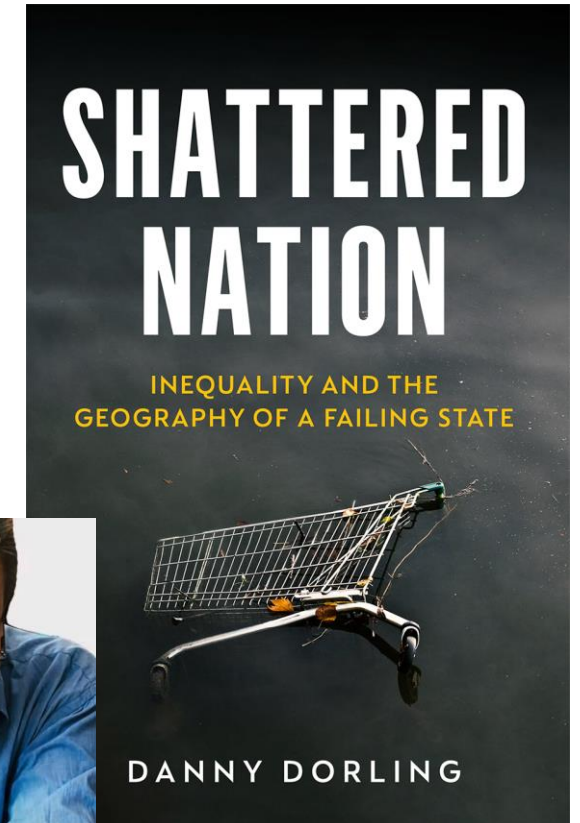
Precarity as a deployed technology

- Employment
- Cascade from precarity
- Encoding the cultural as biological
- The aesthetic turn

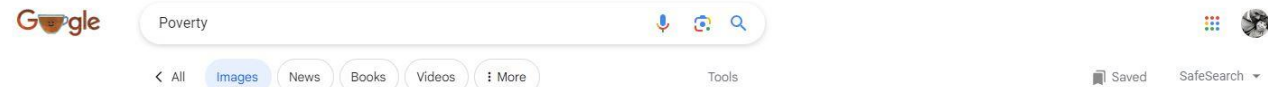


Failing state: increased CCI precarity

- Rising inequality
- Poverty as a technology
- Used by the CCI to communicate to society
- Encoding minority bodies
- The social/biological nexus



Google search 'poverty'



Habitat for Humanity GB
Relative vs Absolute Poverty: Definition



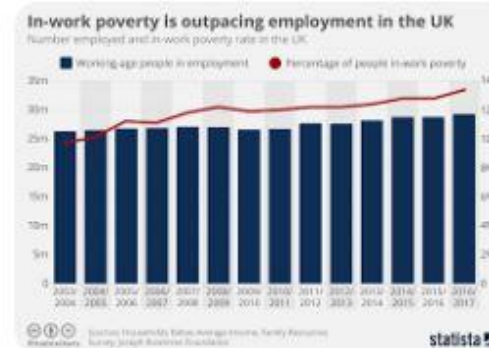
World Bank
Poverty - Development news, research



DoSomething.org
11 Facts About Global Poverty



The United Nations
Poverty in the UK in ...



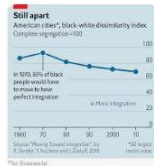
Statista
In-work poverty is outpacing employ...



Barnardo's
bed poverty ...



TheGrio
Poverty rate for Black people dropped ...



The Economist
Segregation and poverty ...



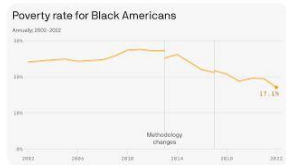
Age UK
Poverty and low income among Black ...



Council on Foreign Relations
Black and White Income Inequality in ...



Moziak Magazine
The Colonial Legacy of Poverty in The ...



Axios
The Black poverty rate just hit a ...



Census Bureau
Black Individuals Had Record Low ...



American Civil Liberties Union
We're Suing South Carolina For Driving ...



Brookings Institution
Long shadows: The Black-white gap in ...



Institute of Race Relations
BME statistics on poverty a...

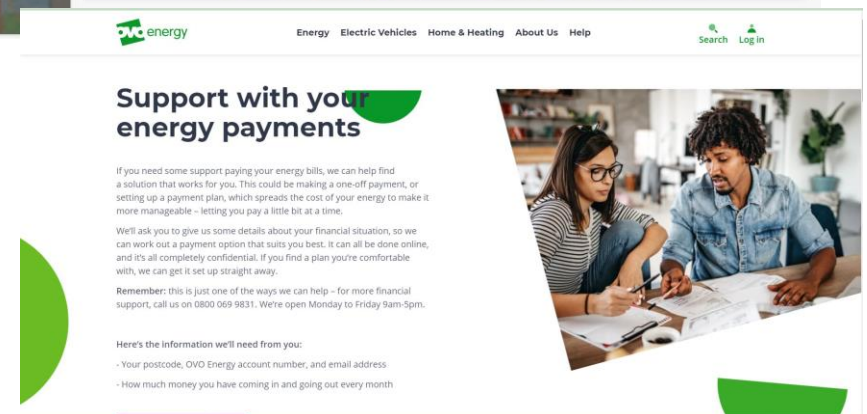
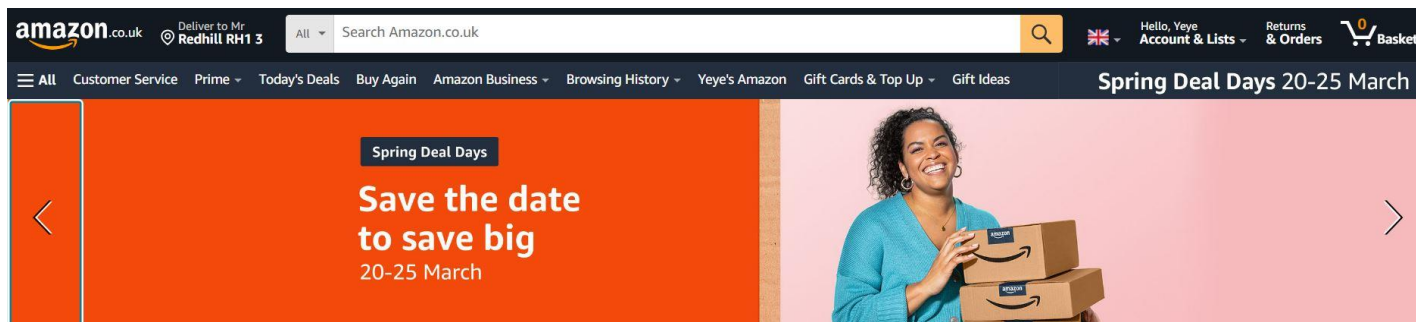
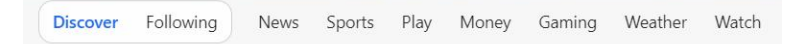
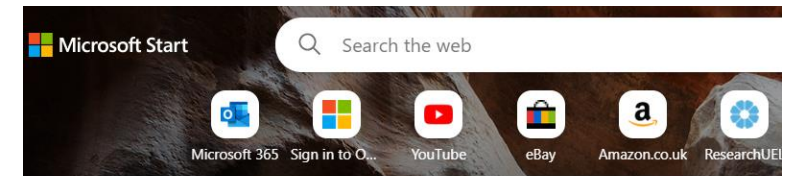
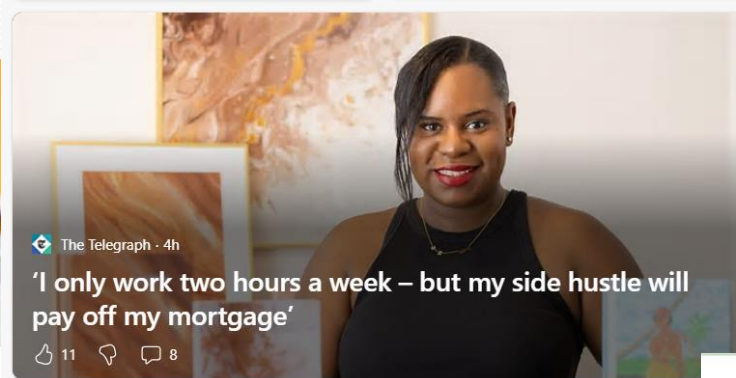
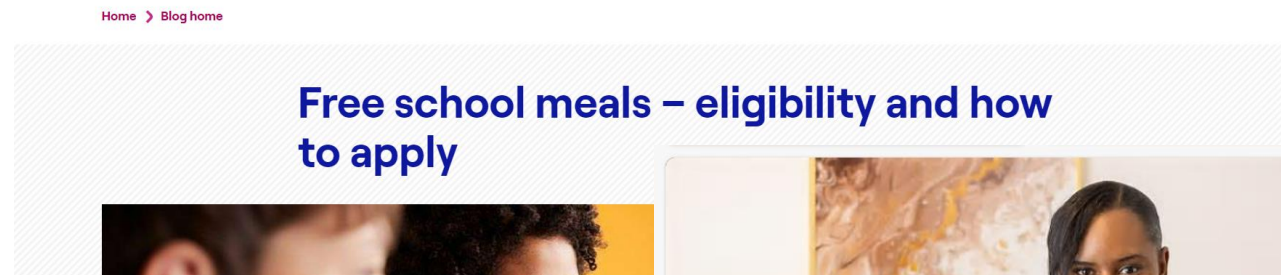


Birmingham Blogs - University of Birmingham
Poverty in the UK or How Poor is Poor ...



Daily Mail
poverty line ...

Subtle depictions of the poverty discourse in CCI outputs

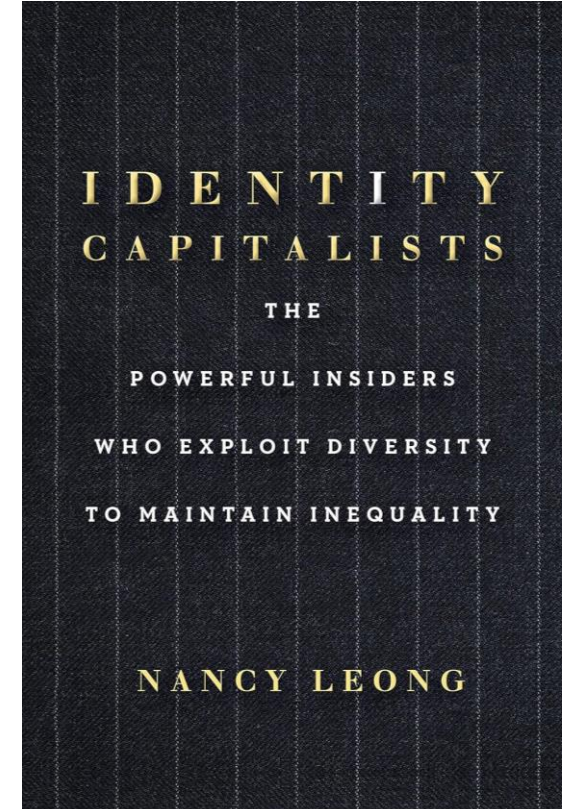


Walking
through the
literature

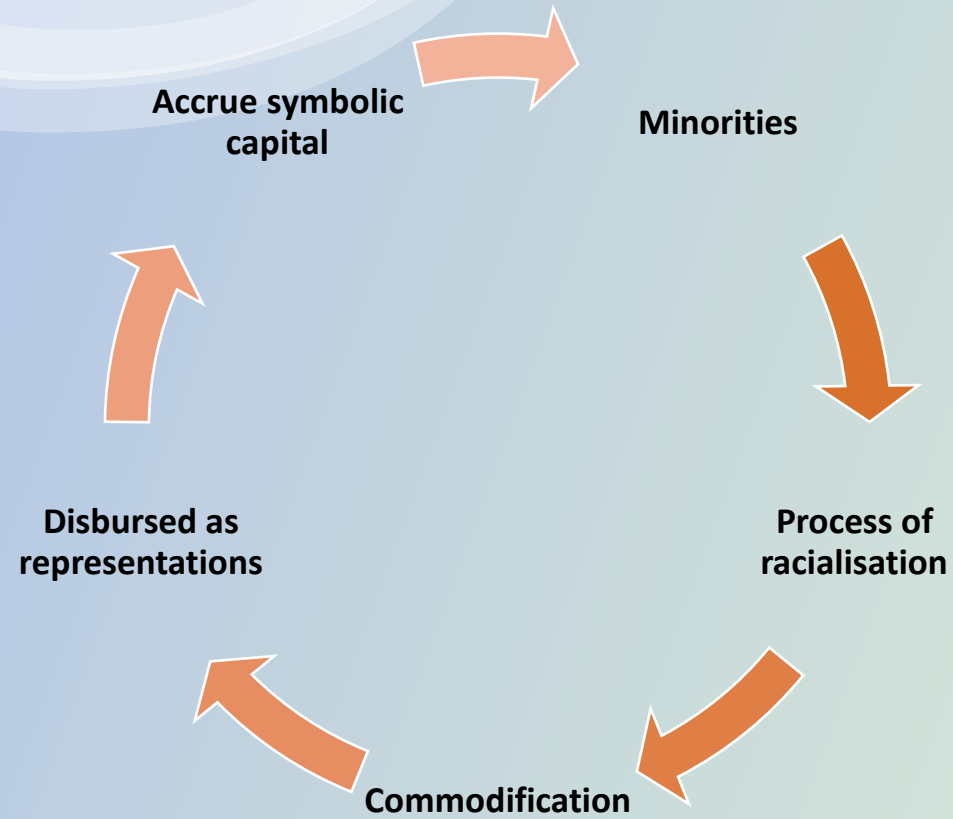
Underpinning Colourwashing: Racial Capital

Theoretical underpinning of colourwashing II

- Socialisation practices are enabled by capital
- Explains how processes of capital become the basis for racialisation
- Originates in the work of Cedric Robinson (1983/2000)
- Affords the comprehension of configured human beings
- Provides clarity to interrogate 'racial mythologies'



Racial capital, process



Leads to increased representation
and colourwashing

Racial capital to symbolic capital

- Reductionist
- Driven by neo-liberal logic
- Commodification of human beings
- Race (diversity) as a performative currency

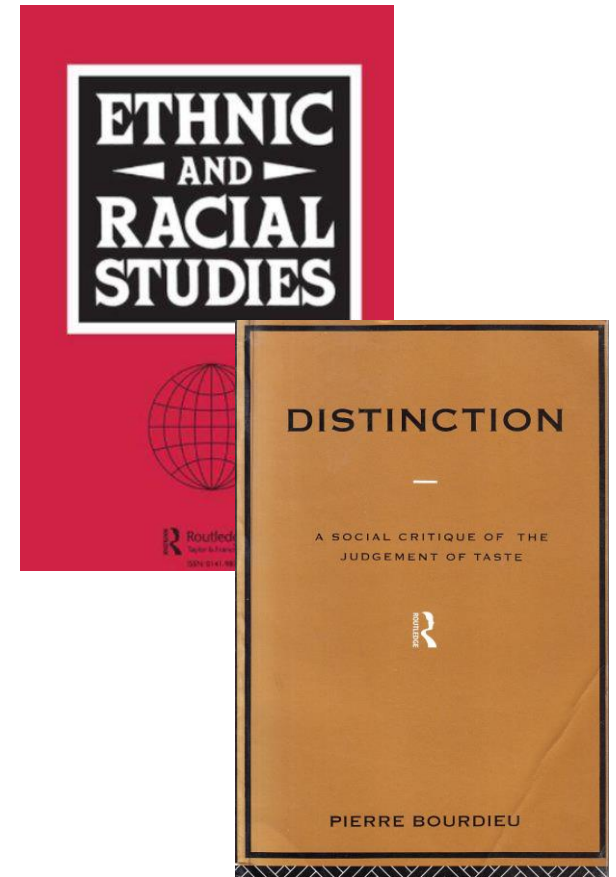


Image Sources: Saha, A. & van Lente, S. (2022) 'Diversity, media and racial capitalism: a case study on publishing.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 45(16), pp.216-236. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2032250> (Accessed: 28 October 2023).

/ Bourdieu, P. (1984 [2000]) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.



In summary

- Increased representation to stark disproportionate levels without employment to match is simply sophistry – colourwashing.
- Increased levels of CCI representation does not negate precarity for minorities. On the contrary, it increases it.
- Furthermore, the CCI as a pillar of neo-liberal capital both requires, and needs bodies that are racialised as a consequence of the racial capital paradigm logics.
- Reiterating the thesis concern that exponential increases in racialised representations are performative only; and are not, indicative of concrete, systemic, inclusive and equitable change/advancement.

Thank you for your time...questions?

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University of
East London

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