Publishing Studies and identity: Gender, sexuality and race

Introduction

This chapter explores the intersections between identity and publishing. Specifically, it discusses notions of gender identity, sexual identity (sexuality) and race in book publishing and how certain critical theories might be applied in Publishing Studies to illuminate these significant social and cultural notions. The concepts and issues discussed here intersect with our everyday experience. We are all implicated in gender, sexuality and race in intimate ways (Offord & Kerruish 2009). As Martha Nussbaum notes, these concepts deal with 'concerns which lie deep in many of us, and which are frequently central to the ways in which we define our identity and the search for the good' (1997, 155). Because race, gender and sexuality are at the heart of how we think and feel about ourselves, they also are at the heart of the narratives we produce, publish and disseminate. All books, both fiction and non-fiction, present an idea, or a *construction*, of race, gender and sexuality, sometimes explicitly, sometimes in ways that are more subtle. Sometimes these constructions take forms that resist or refuse dominant ways of thinking about gender, sexuality or race, sometimes they do the exact opposite. Many publications not only reinforce traditional conceptions of gender, sexuality and race but also perpetuate negative stereotypes. Studying the intersections between race, gender, sexuality and publishing is sometimes contentious. It is not uncommon for those new to the study of publishing and literature to think that books are (and should be) published purely because they tell a good story or relay important information. The truth is that more books are published, read and reviewed that tell stories about race, gender and sexuality from a white, male heterosexual perspective than from any other perspective. This bias in publishing reflects, reinforces and disseminates broader social biases. This bias is also a rich field of research for Publishing Studies scholars.

Gender and sexuality

If we are to explore gender and sexuality in the context of publishing, we first need to have a basic understanding of these (complex) terms. Gender and sexuality are interconnected,

perhaps even entangled, concepts (Offord & Kerruish 2009).[1] Gender is a term that refers to the social and cultural roles that define what is meant by feminine and masculine (Connell 2009). On the other hand, sexuality is a term that is usually associated with an individual's sexual preferences, orientation, behaviours or desires (Beasley 2005). It is difficult to understand gender without thinking about sexuality, and vice versa (Offord & Kerruish 2009). In the following section a number of critical theories are introduced that attempt to explore, question, debate and reflect upon how gender and sexuality manifest. These critical theories, or ways of contextualising and framing gender and sexuality, can be of use in the study of publishing and book culture.

Gender

The term 'gender' comes from the Latin *genus*, meaning 'type' or 'sort'. Given this definition, it is obvious that gender is a word that indicates some kind of classification or grouping (Offord & Kerruish 2009). As a term and a social and cultural practice, gender is most often constructed as binary. In dominant and mainstream discourse, gender classifies people and things into two categories: masculine or feminine. Gender is rarely conceived as having more than these two categories, though some cultures have included three or more gender categories (Roscoe 2000). It is also increasingly accepted that there are up to five biological sex types (Fausto-Sterling 2000). To put it simply, gender refers to the socially structured behaviour, roles and characteristics that we associate with men and women (Connell 2009). Gender is one of the fundamental categories used in most societies to organise or structure social and personal relations (Connell 2009; Offord & Kerruish 2009). It is also fundamental to how people define and understand themselves (Connell 2009), and gender is often the foundation and core of an individual's identity (Offord & Kerruish 2009). According to feminist scholars, the different behaviour and social roles assigned to men and women are often tied to inequalities (Connell 2009; Casad & Kasabian 2009; Offord & Kerruish 2009). Gender and biological sex are theorised in many ways, but there are two dominant theories that are used to understand them: *social constructionism* and *essentialism*.

Advocates of social constructionism argue that social and cultural institutions, practices and behaviours produce what we call masculinity and femininity (Offord & Kerruish 2009). Social constructionists favour a social explanation for the constitution of gender and identity rather

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than genetic or biological explanations (Offord & Kerruish 2009). An advocate of social constructionism would insist that gender be studied as a social construction, not as a natural or inborn quality. Furthermore, social constructionists suggest that individuals actively construct their gender and identities through the (often ritualistic) behaviours and practices they perform (Butler 1990 & 2004). A social constructionist does not believe that gender is inherently linked to biological sex (Gatens 1983). Alternatively, advocates of essentialism argue that it is possible to distinguish between the essential and non-essential aspects of persons, objects or phenomena (Offord & Kerruish 2009). Fuss (cited in Baker 2017, xi) defines essentialism as 'a belief in the real, true essences of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity'. In other words, essentialists believe that gender arises *naturally* from bodies and is *inherently* linked to biological sex. For many essentialists, gender is an inborn quality.

It is important to note that the notion of an essential gender has largely been discredited by both theorists and science (Fausto-Sterling 2000), as Judith Butler (1990, 214) notes:

> Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts.

Thinking about gender in a Publishing Studies context means critically examining how gender is reproduced and disseminated through acts of publishing and how those acts of publishing, and the discourses they circulate, then inform (and are incorporated into) gender practices and rituals and, importantly, our gender/sex identities. It is important to be open to the ways that notions and definitions of gender change and evolve through the dissemination of ideas in published artefacts. As Butler argues: 'My view is that no simple definition of gender will suffice, and that more important than coming up with a strict and applicable definition is to track the travels of the term through public culture' (2004, 184).

Our ideas about gender inform (and perhaps even dictate) the narratives we tell about ourselves (in public culture), which, in turn, determine the kinds of stories that are published and disseminated. This classic quote from Simone de Beauvoir (2010, 5), illustrates the different kinds of narratives (or discourses) that are disseminated around gender:

> Woman has ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands. Man

superbly ignores the fact that his anatomy also includes glands, such as the testicles, and that they secrete hormones. He thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it.

These ideas find their way into books as a result of a publishing bias that selects, publishes and promotes written works in which men and women are gendered in specific ways. These ideas also influence the ways that published artefacts written by women are treated by the publishing industry, reviewers and readers.

In Publishing Studies, we can track the ways that ideas about gender (and sex) change, evolve or regress in book culture by asking questions like: What kinds of narratives about gender get published and which ones do not? Which narratives about gender prove to be more popular with readers, and why? Do men and women adopt different reading practices based on their ideas of gender? Is publishing biased towards male writers over female writers? Is gender a factor in what types of books get reviewed and which authors win literary prizes? Which roles in publishing (e.g. editors, publishers, promoters) are dominated by men and which by women, and why? Are men and women paid equally in publishing? Are genres gendered? Do more women read certain genres whilst men read others? Do certain literary genres reinforce gender stereotypes more than others? And perhaps the biggest question we can ask about gender in Publishing Studies is this one: How do published artefacts contribute to the constitution, that is, the making, of our gender identities?

Sexuality

As noted above, sexuality is an individual's sexual preferences, orientation, behaviours or desires (Beasley 2005). Sexuality is an important and fundamental aspect of life, both personally and on a collective level (Offord & Kerruish 2009; Beasley 2005). Like gender, sexuality is one of the foundations of our personal identities (Connell 2009). Even so, discussions of sexuality are often challenging and controversial (Offord & Kerruish 2009). As Michael Leunig notes, 'sexuality is where people are very human and vulnerable. This is precisely where truths emerge—and sensitivities and fears' (1998, 60). When we discuss sexuality, we are discussing very intense feelings and deep differences (Nussbaum 1997, 223). Furthermore, Ken Plummer (2008, 16) notes that:

The study of sexuality needs always to be seen as a political practice; the doing of sexualities is always embroiled in power relations; the writing about sexualities will always bring policy, political and public projects.

In other words, as a topic of investigation, sexuality intersects with numerous other domains, such as social and health policy, political discourse and questions of access to and representation in the public sphere, to name just a few. Needless to say, sexuality is not the same for all of us. Sexuality 'may be thought about, experienced, and acted on differently according to age, class, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation and preference, religion, and region' (Vance 1984, 17). The noted sexuality scholar Jeffrey Weeks argues that sexuality, like gender, is a social construct which is not determined by biological sex or even gender (1986). Weeks posits that our emotions, desires and relationships are shaped in multiple and intricate ways by the society we live in (1986). Indeed, the eminent philosopher Michel Foucault (1979, 105) wrote:

> Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct.

Sexuality is a common source of discrimination (Beasley 2005; Connell 2009; Offord & Kerruish 2009). Although the publishing world is often viewed as progressive, perhaps even too progressive (Deahl 2017), and as a space supportive of difference, it is, like all other institutions and industries, informed by social ideas about sexuality, about what is 'normal' and what is 'abnormal'. These ideas can, and often do, lead to biases that privilege heterosexual authors over non-heterosexual authors. Michael Hurley (2010) has shown how mainstream literary institutions (reviewing, publishing, journals, grants bodies) in Australia were, up until very recently, hostile or indifferent to gay and lesbian writing. From 1970 to 1990, major Australian publishers produced only *five* gay and lesbian works of fiction and a total of *eight* non-fiction books by or about gay and lesbian people (Hurley 2010). This is a significant problem when, as Hurley (2010, 44) writes:

> Most minorities have a vested interest in how they are represented and how their cultures are documented. Cultures are built on the sharing of structures and processes of sense-making which include *inter alia* documentation, the negotiation of their own histories, associated artefacts (including "literature") and how they are used in the making of social and literary

narratives. For many gays and lesbians, fictional narratives, whatever the form involved (books, film, theatre, the internet), enable personal and collective identification.

As with gender, our ideas about sexuality inform (and perhaps even dictate) the narratives we tell about ourselves, which, in turn, determine the kinds of stories about sexuality that are published and disseminated. Societal ideas about sexuality find their way into books as a result of a publishing bias that selects, publishes and promotes written works in which sexuality is represented in specific (often heteronormative) ways. Furthermore, it is clear that works by heterosexual authors that feature heterosexual characters and stories find publication much more easily than works by non-heterosexual authors that feature lesbian, gay or bisexual stories (Hurley 2010). Those works by homosexual authors that are published contribute to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) culture, enriching the discourse about sexuality and challenging dominant representations of LGBTI individuals. Indeed, published works written by LGBTI individuals push the boundaries of what is acceptable in the public domain and can initiate or strengthen social and human rights movements. Referring to gay male literature in particular, Christopher Bram (2012, ix) writes:

> The gay revolution began as a literary revolution. Before World War II, homosexuality was a dirty secret that was almost never written about and rarely discussed. Suddenly, after the war, a handful of homosexual writers boldly used their personal experience in their work. … Their writing was the catalyst for a social shift as deep and unexpected as what was achieved by the civil rights and women's movements.

Indeed, published artefacts (books, magazines, pamphlets and even posters) are often the inspiration for and foundation of social and human rights movements, the women's liberation and Civil Rights movements being key examples. As authors like Truman Capote and Gore Vidal were to the gay liberation movement, so were Virginia Woolf and Edith Wharton and many others to the women's liberation movement (Whelehan 2015). Social movements also inspire widespread publishing activity, as Imelda Whelehan (2015, 114) notes:

> The Women's Liberation Movement produced feminist writers and readers. It inspired specialist publishers and small presses, as well as academic study, bolstering further interest in women's writing.

Publishing Studies can investigate and document the ways that ideas about sexuality change, evolve or regress in book culture by asking questions like: What kinds of narratives about

sexuality get published and which ones do not? Which narratives about sexuality prove to be more popular with readers, and why? Do people adopt different reading practices based on their sexual identities? How precisely is the publishing bias towards heterosexual writers over non-heterosexual writers enacted? Is sexuality a factor in what types of books get reviewed and which authors win literary prizes? Is sexuality an issue in employment in the publishing industry? Are certain genres straighter or queerer than others? Do certain literary genres reinforce sexual stereotypes more than others? And, as with gender, the biggest question we can ask about sexuality in Publishing Studies is: How do published artefacts contribute to the constitution—the making—of our sexual identities?

Perhaps a good place to begin an investigation into how publishing intersects with our sexual identities is to consider our own reading practices. Do we read published works that feature characters whose sexuality is different to ours? If yes, what factors led us to choose that work? If no, why not? Are our attitudes about these things similar to those of our family and friends? If not, how do they differ? Reflecting on these simple questions can illuminate the ways that discourses about sexuality influence what we choose to read, reveal the notions of sexuality disseminated in the books we buy and also show how published works influence not only our purchasing and reading habits but our sense of our own sexual identity.

Race

The concept of race has historically signified the division of humanity into a small number of groups based upon five criteria based on physical characteristics, or phenotypes (James 2017). These characteristics are primarily skin colour, eye shape, hair texture, bone structure, and perhaps also certain behaviours, intelligence and delinquency (James 2017). The dominant scholarly position is that the concept of race is a modern phenomenon, at least in Europe and the Americas (James 2017). Many of us believe that race is evident, that differences in physical appearance between peoples proves that race is both real and indicate significant biological differences (James 2017; Zack 2002). However, many scholars argue that race, like gender and sexuality, is a social construction (Zack 2002). These scholars argue that there is little biological evidence for racial categories (James 2017). Zack (2002) argues that '[e]ssences, geography, phenotypes, genotypes, and genealogy are the only known candidates for physical scientific bases of race. Each fails. Therefore, there is no physical scientific basis for the social racial taxonomy' (88).

Nakayama & Krizek (1995, 298) argue that 'discourses on whiteness are relatively hidden in everyday interaction, but when whites are confronted, when they are asked directly about whiteness, a multiplicity of discourses become visible'. This multiplicity of discourses about whiteness 'drives the dynamic nature of its power relations or forces, always resecuring the hegemonic position of whiteness' (Nakayama & Krizek 1995, 298).

One of the racial characteristics mentioned above, intelligence, is particularly significant in terms of publishing. Literary culture is seen as a sign of a culture's refinement and intelligence (Altbach 1997). The absence of literary culture therefore is associated with low intelligence. The presence of books and literature in a culture was, and still is, seen as indicating superior civilisation, meaning that cultures without published artefacts were considered inferior (Altbach 1997). This was certainly true in Australia, where the absence of book culture in pre-colonisation indigenous cultures was used to justify racist discourse about aboriginal people as uncivilised. As Penny Van Toorn (2009, 6) notes:

> That pre-contact Aboriginal societies were without European-style books and alphabetic writing was in itself a politically neutral fact. This historical fact became politically charged, however, by the symbolic values attached to books. Europeans viewed books and alphabetic writing as signs of their own cultural superiority over Indigenous societies, which they deemed to be without history, without writing, without books. Books and writing were some among many material and cultural benefits that philanthropists and missionaries believed Indigenous peoples needed, in order to be "raised up" to the level of Europeans. These Eurocentric understandings of what a book was, how it might function, and what its very existence said about its culture of origin remained largely undisturbed in Australia until the last decades of the twentieth century, when Aboriginal stories and songs previously collected by anthropologists were incorporated into major anthologies of Australian literature.

As with gender and sexuality, our ideas about race inform (and perhaps even dictate) the narratives we tell about ourselves, which, in turn, determine the kinds of stories that are published and disseminated. Societal ideas about race find their way into books as a result of a publishing bias that selects, publishes and promotes written works in which race is represented in specific ways. Furthermore, it is clear that works by white authors that feature white characters and stories find publication much more easily than works by non-white authors that feature non-white stories.

Publishing Studies can investigate and document the ways that ideas about race and identity change, evolve or regress in book culture by asking questions akin to those above: What kinds of books about race get published and which ones do not? Which narratives about race prove to be more popular with readers, and why? Do people adopt different reading practices based on their race identities? How precisely is the publishing bias towards white writers over non-white writers enacted? Is race a factor in what types of books get reviewed and which authors win literary prizes? Is race an issue in employment in the publishing industry? Are certain genres whiter than others? Do certain literary genres reinforce racial stereotypes more than others? And, as with gender and sexuality, the biggest question we can ask about race in Publishing Studies is: How do published artefacts contribute to the constitution—the making—of our race identities?

Frameworks and theories for exploring identity in publishing

The research methodologies that can be applied in the discipline of Publishing Studies when exploring gender, sexuality and race are only limited by our imagination. For example, research in Publishing Studies can be facilitated by the application of methodologies that include: literature review and analysis, deconstruction, discourse analysis, statistical analysis, textual analysis, interviews and other forms of ethnographic research, action research and reflection and reflexivity. However, there are three critical frameworks that are well-suited to exploring publishing as a social and cultural practice and offer a rich array of ideas and techniques for exploring the intersections between book culture and identity, especially in relation to gender, sexuality and race. These are Feminist Theory, Queer Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies. They are outlined below.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse that aims to understand the nature of gender inequality (Offord & Kerruish 2009; Doucet & Mauthner 2007). Feminist theory examines women's and men's social roles and lived experience in a diverse range of settings, from the private sphere of the home to the public spheres of the media and politics (Doucet & Mauthner 2007). Themes explored in feminism include discrimination, inequity, objectification, including sexual objectification, oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping and many others (Doucet & Mauthner 2007). Whether or not these

themes are explored using expressly feminist methods is not easy to determine. As Doucet & Mauthner (2007, 36) ask:

> Is there a specifically feminist method? Are there feminist methodologies and epistemologies, or simply feminist approaches to these? Given diversity and debates in feminist theory, how can there be a consensus on what constitutes "feminist" methodologies and epistemologies?

While it is difficult to argue that there is a specifically feminist methodology it is certainly the case that feminist scholars have embraced particular characteristics or approaches in their work (Doucet & Mauthner 2007). Firstly, feminist researchers 'have long advocated that feminist research should be not just on women, but *for* women and, where possible, with women' (Doucet & Mauthner 2007, 40). Secondly, feminist researchers 'have actively engaged with methodological innovation through challenging conventional or mainstream ways of collecting, analyzing, and presenting data' (Doucet & Mauthner 2007, 40). Thirdly, feminist research is 'concerned with issues of broader social change and social justice' (Doucet & Mauthner 2007, 40). According to Beverly Skeggs, feminist research is distinct from non-feminist research because it 'begins from the premise that the nature of reality in western society is unequal and hierarchical' (1994, 77). Fourthly, feminist research focuses on power relations, on how social and cultural institutions and practices impact on women and men differently, and impact on different types of women and men differently again (Doucet & Mauthner 2005). As Lennon and Whitford (1994) note: 'Feminism's most compelling epistemological insight lies in the connections it has made between knowledge and power' (1). Fifth, reflexivity, or the practice of critical reflection, has come to be a potent method for feminist researchers (Doucet & Mauthner 2007).

Reflexivity is defined as 'reflection upon the conditions through which research is produced, disseminated and received' (Matless 2009, 627.). Reflexivity also often includes discussion of our unique worldview or positionality (Matless 2009). Douglas Macbeth defines reflexivity as 'a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, Other, text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself' (2001, 35). For Rose, reflexivity should highlight the 'emergence of difference' through the research process and be 'less a process of self-discovery than of self-construction' (1997, 313). All of these approaches are relevant for research in Publishing Studies, and offer potent ways to explore questions about gender inequality and representation in book culture and the publishing industry.

Queer Theory

Queer Theory has its origins in Poststructuralism (Jagose 1996) and employs a number of Poststructuralism's key ideas (Spargo 1999). As Spargo (1999, 41) argues, Queer Theory employs:

> Lacan's psychoanalytic models of decentred, unstable identity, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of binary conceptual and linguistic structures, and … Foucault's model of discourse, knowledge and power.

At the most basic level, Queer Theory is a set of theories based on the central idea that identities are not fixed and closed off from outside influences but rather fluid and permeable (Baker 2011). Queer Theory is also based on the idea that our gender and sexual identities are not determined by biological sex (Jagose 1996). Queer Theory proposes that it is meaningless to try to understand gender and sexuality (or indeed race or class) through limiting identity categories such as 'man' or 'woman', 'heterosexual' or 'homosexual' (Jagose 1996). This is because identity (or personal subjectivity) are not simplistic but complex and consist of numerous elements, many of them in contradiction to each other. This complexity and in-built fragmentation of identity mean that it is reductive to assume that individuals can be understood collectively on the basis of a shared characteristic such as gender or sexuality (Jagose 1996).

The logical extension of this critique of sexual and gender categories or identities is a deconstruction of and challenge to all notions of identity categories as fixed, lasting and unified (or without ambivalence). In this way, the boundaries between other categories, such as race and class, can also be interrogated. Rather than fixed identities or categories, Queer Theorists such as Judith Butler (1990) suggest instead an identity (or subjectivity) that is fluid, ephemeral, complex and ambivalent. The quote below from Annamarie Jagose (Jagose 1996, 3) comprehensively describes the core concerns of Queer Theory:

> Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability—which claims heterosexuality as its origin, when it is more properly its effect—queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. Institutionally, queer has been associated most prominently with lesbian and gay subjects, but its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Whether as transvestite performance or academic deconstruction, queer locates and exploits the incoherencies in those three terms which stabilise

heterosexuality. Demonstrating the impossibility of any "natural" sexuality, it calls into question even such apparently unproblematic terms as "man" and "woman".

Thus, Queer Theory's principal focus is the denaturalisation of categories/norms (Jagose 1996, de Lauretis 1991, Butler 1990) and abrading the borders between 'infamous' binary terms like male/female, natural/unnatural, normal/abnormal, heterosexual/homosexual, white/black, self/other (Baker 2010).

The work of Queer Theory is one of deconstruction (Spargo 1999, Jagose 1996); to dissect and alter how we think about and *live* core aspects of human subjectivity such as identity, sex/gender, race and sexuality. This work is undertaken in the context of a culture steeped in heteronormativity—the discourse and practice of presumed and privileged heterosexuality (Butler 1990, 106). Queer Theory works to undermine the privileged position of heteronormativity by exposing the ways in which sexualities and genders are produced in/by discourse and the ways in which non-normative genders and sexualities resist, transcend and trouble normative notions of sex, gender and sexuality categories that would otherwise be widely (mis)understood as somehow natural, essential or incontestable. From a Queer Theory perspective, genders and sexualities (and identities) are fluid, permeable, mutable and largely the result of repeatedly performed utterances, rituals and behaviours; or *performativity* (Butler 1993).

Performativity

Judith Butler's theory of performativity could be said to be one of the most influential ideas of Queer Theory (Jagose 1996, 83). Judith Butler first presented the notion of *performativity* in her ground-breaking work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Butler frames the notion of performativity in relation to gender and norms of heterosexuality (1990; 1993). Butler further argues that gender is a performance without ontological status when she writes: 'There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; …identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (1990, 25). For Butler, performativity describes how what might be assumed to be an internal essence to something such as gender or subjectivity is 'manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body' (2004, 94). Therefore, it can be argued that genders, sexualities and identities are all equally performative; manufactured through a sustained set of acts (some of them cognitive) enacted through the racial, gendered and sexual stylization of bodies. Queer theories of performativity draw on and align with Poststructural

conceptions of identity in which identity/subjectivity is seen as multiple, changing and fragmented (Sarup 1996). In this way, performativity re-conceives gendered identities and sexualities as plural, varying, fragmented and produced in, by and through discourse.

For Butler, performativity is not total 'voluntarism' (2004). We do not freely choose how to enact gender or sexuality without constraint (Butler 2004). Our genders, sexualities and identities are not freely chosen but rather 'compelled and sanctioned by the norms of compulsory heterosexuality (*heteronormativity*), and the subject has no choice but to exist within… norms and conventions of nature' such as binary sex difference (Pratt 2009b). Performative subjectivities are also socio-culturally and historically embedded; they are 'citational chains' and their effects depend on social conventions (Pratt 2009a). According to Butler, gender and sexual norms and identities are produced, disseminated and reinforced through repetitions of an ideal such as the ideal of 'woman' or 'man' (Pratt 2009b). As the heteronormative ideal is a fiction, and thereby unachievable or 'uninhabitable', there is room for *disidentification* (or counter identification) and human agency and resistance (Pratt 2009b).

Critical Whiteness Studies

The past two decades has seen the emergence of an interdisciplinary field of research and commentary that can be broadly gathered under the umbrella of 'critical race and whiteness studies' (Nicoll 2005). As Fiona Nicoll (2005, 1) writes about Critical Whiteness Studies:

> Common to the diverse perspectives and positions that constitute this field is the view that, far from having been "resolved" through the anti-colonial movements and civil rights struggles of the latter part of the twentieth century, race and whiteness continue to shape local and global subjectivities and opportunities. In settler-colonial nations like Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada, we can observe the currency of whiteness as a concept and value in the very vehemence with which politicians and journalists proclaim and deploy their "benevolent intentions" against the rights and sovereignty claims of Indigenous and other Australians racialised as non-white.

The beginnings of Critical Whiteness Studies are said to be in the writing of W. E. B. Du Bois who, in 1903, wrote that the colour line is the defining characteristic of American society (Applebaum 2016, 1). Referring to the United States, Barbara Applebaum (2016, 1) writes:

> Even when a society is built on a commitment to equality, and even with the election of its first black president, the United States has been unsuccessful in bringing about an end to the rampant

and violent effects of racism, as numerous acts of racial violence in the media have shown. For generations, scholars of colour, among them Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Franz Fanon, have maintained that whiteness lies at the center of the problem of racism. It is only relatively recently that the critical study of whiteness has become an academic field, committed to disrupting racism by problematizing whiteness as a corrective to the traditional exclusive focus on the racialized "other."

Critical Whiteness Studies is a growing field of scholarship whose aim is to 'reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege' (Applebaum 2016, 1). Critical Whiteness Studies is based on an understanding or conception of racism that is connected to white privilege and white supremacy (Nicoll 2005; Applebaum 2016). A foundational tenet of Critical Whiteness Studies is that unless white people 'learn to acknowledge, rather than deny, how whites are complicit in racism, and until white people develop an awareness that critically questions the frames of truth and conceptions of the 'good' through which they understand their social world racism will persist'(Applebaum 2016, 1).

Nicoll argues that to appreciate the role of whiteness 'in shaping Australia's economic, military and political priorities today' we need to acknowledge that there was a significant shift in the meanings attached to 'whiteness', 'race' and 'racism' under the conservative federal government of John Howard (2005, 1). She writes:

> Rather than being understood as a collective and active cultural inheritance, racism has been thoroughly reconstructed as an individual moral aberration. As a consequence, the claim that individuals or groups within the nation might be racist has become tantamount to slander. This discursive reconstruction of racism has forged a broad social consensus which is most frequently expressed in claims that our tolerant, multicultural nation has moved beyond whatever "racial issues" it might have once had.

This shift means that it is more difficult to discuss or analyse institutional, societal and cultural racism, especially when it appears in subtle forms (Nicoll 2005). It is important to note that the shift referred to by Nicoll was facilitated by the publication of books, magazines, newspapers, websites, government reports and papers and other media. It was through publishing that this shift occurred and it is though publishing (and other media) that this shift is maintained. It is also largely through published artefacts that resistance to this shift occurs.

Critical Whiteness Studies foregrounds the social construction of race and analyses the effects of race-based discourse, especially as it has been used to justify discrimination against non-

whites (Nicoll 2005; Applebaum 2016). A number of whiteness scholars have argued that whiteness should be understood as 'a product of discursive formation' and a 'rhetorical construction' (Nakayama & Krizek 1995). As Nakayama and Krizek (1995, 293) write, 'there is no 'true essence' to 'whiteness': there are only historically contingent constructions of that social location'. In Western societies, whiteness is ubiquitous, it occupies a central and yet often invisible position (Nakayama & Krizek 1995). Whiteness is considered normal and neutral, and is in opposition to blackness which is constructed as Other and as abnormal (Nicoll 2005; Applebaum 2016). Major areas of research in critical whiteness studies include the characteristics and effects of white identity, the historical and contemporary processes by which white racial identities were and are constituted, the intersection of politics and culture to white identity and, significantly, white privilege (McIntosh 1990; Nakayama & Krizek 1995; Applebaum 2016).

White privilege

According to Peggy McIntosh, white people in Western societies enjoy advantages that non-whites do not experience (1990). McIntosh frames these advantages as 'an invisible package of unearned assets' (1990, 31). The term 'white privilege' refers to obvious and less obvious advantages that white people may not recognize they have and is different from overt bias or prejudice (McIntosh 1990; Nakayama & Krizek 1995; Applebaum 2016). White privilege can take many forms but includes cultural affirmations of one's own worth, greater social status, freedom to travel and relocate, ability to participate in work and the economy, freedom to consume, to access educational, legal and other facilities, to have time and finances for leisure and sport, and the ability to voice one's opinion, both in public and in private, without fear of retribution (McIntosh 1990; Nakayama & Krizek 1995; Applebaum 2016). The concept of white privilege also describes the ways that white people assume that their experience is somehow representative of all others' experience, or universal, and the way they often perceive their own life experience as standard or 'normal' (McIntosh 1990; Nakayama & Krizek 1995; Applebaum 2016). In the context of publishing, white privilege means that white authors are more likely to be published, more likely to be reviewed, more likely to win literary prizes and more likely to be read. It also means that most editors, most publishers and most of those employed in the publishing industry in other roles in the English-speaking world are white people.

As with sexuality, a good place to begin an investigation into how publishing intersects with race is to consider our own reading practices. If we go to our bookshelves and pick out the titles written by non-white authors, how many do we find? If we conduct some research into these authors we are likely to find that white privilege made their road to publication more difficult and affected their ability to gain reviews, readers and win literary prizes.

Conclusion

All books present an idea, or a *construction*, of race, gender and sexuality, sometimes explicitly, sometimes in ways that are more subtle. Oftentimes, published artefacts and the narratives they contain present gender, sexuality and race in ways that resist or refuse the dominant ways of thinking about them. Mostly, however, the books we write, publish, buy and read reinforce dominant constructions of racial, gender and sexual identities and many perpetuate negative stereotypes. As we have discussed, these aspects of our identity are deeply significant, and often contested. It may not seem obvious at first, but when we look a little more closely we can see that publishing, as a discourse machine, is a significant component in how we constitute our identities and what those identities look like. Our ideas about gender, sexuality and race inform (and perhaps even dictate) the narratives we tell about ourselves, which, in turn, determine the kinds of stories that are published and disseminated. Societal ideas about these aspects of our identities find their way into books as a result of a publishing bias that selects, publishes and promotes written works in which identities are represented in specific (privileged) ways. Publishing Studies can illuminate these inequalities and biases. It can also investigate and document the ways that ideas about identity change, evolve or regress in book culture and in the publishing industry. Feminist Theory, Queer Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies are three powerful frameworks for exploring important questions about gender, sexuality and race in book culture.

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