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Title: Sanger, N. 2005. 'Constructions of whiteness, gender, class and sexuality in South African English-medium men's and women's magazines.' *Feminist Intellectual Activism: Within and Beyond the Academy Conference*, University of the Western Cape, 14 – 16 September 2005.

Authors: Nadia Sanger

Main disciplinary area: (e.g. education or psychology): Social Science

Keywords: 'whiteness', gender, sexuality, magazine media, democracy

Select output type from the list below: (delete inappropriate options)

Conference or Seminar Paper

Confidential: Yes/No (delete inappropriate option) No

Website URL: (where appropriate)

Abstract (add a descriptive paragraph of Output): This presentation aims to explore the ways in which whiteness, gender and sexuality are represented through a select group of South African magazines. By looking at magazines such as *Men's Health*, *GQ*, *FHM*, *True Love*, *Femina* and *Fair Lady*, I intend to explore how these magazines as a medium of communication construct whiteness, gender and sexuality to their imagined readerships constituted of various racial, cultural, gendered and sexual identities. Most significantly, I intend to discuss the ways in which whiteness as an identity construction generates norms, ways of understanding history and ways of defining the self and 'other'. Constructed as the core against which all 'other' identities are measured, whiteness occupies a normalised, privileged, deified and raceless space. Identifying whiteness means marking its central place in the social construction of race and disrupting the (in)visible ways whiteness retains power and privilege. In an effort to disrupt existing racial frameworks, it is necessary to identify, name and decentre whiteness as an elitist category. By particularising whiteness in its relativity to gender,

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class and sexuality in a specific set of magazine media, I hope to expose patterns securing, reproducing and maintaining white supremacy in a particular social and historical space.



ISRO

Social science that makes a difference

**Feminist Intellectual Activism:
Within and Beyond the
Academy**
HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

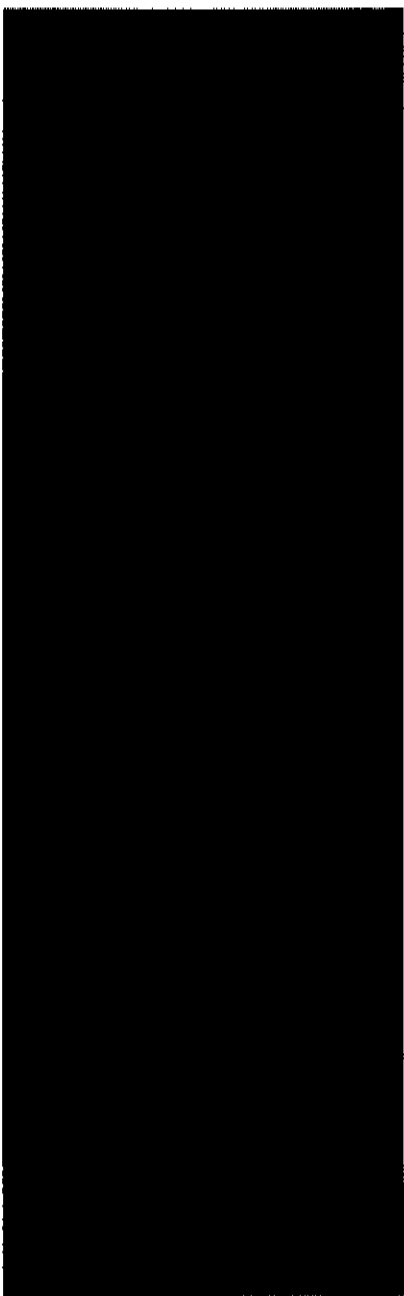


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**Constructions of whiteness, gender and
sexuality in South African magazines**

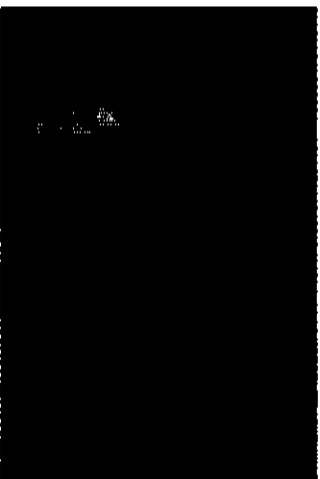
Background



**Exploratory
study**

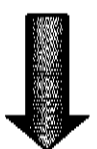


**How dominant discourses are
normalised, maintained and
reproduced in South African
women's and men's magazines**



Methodology

Based on a
Postmodernist
framework



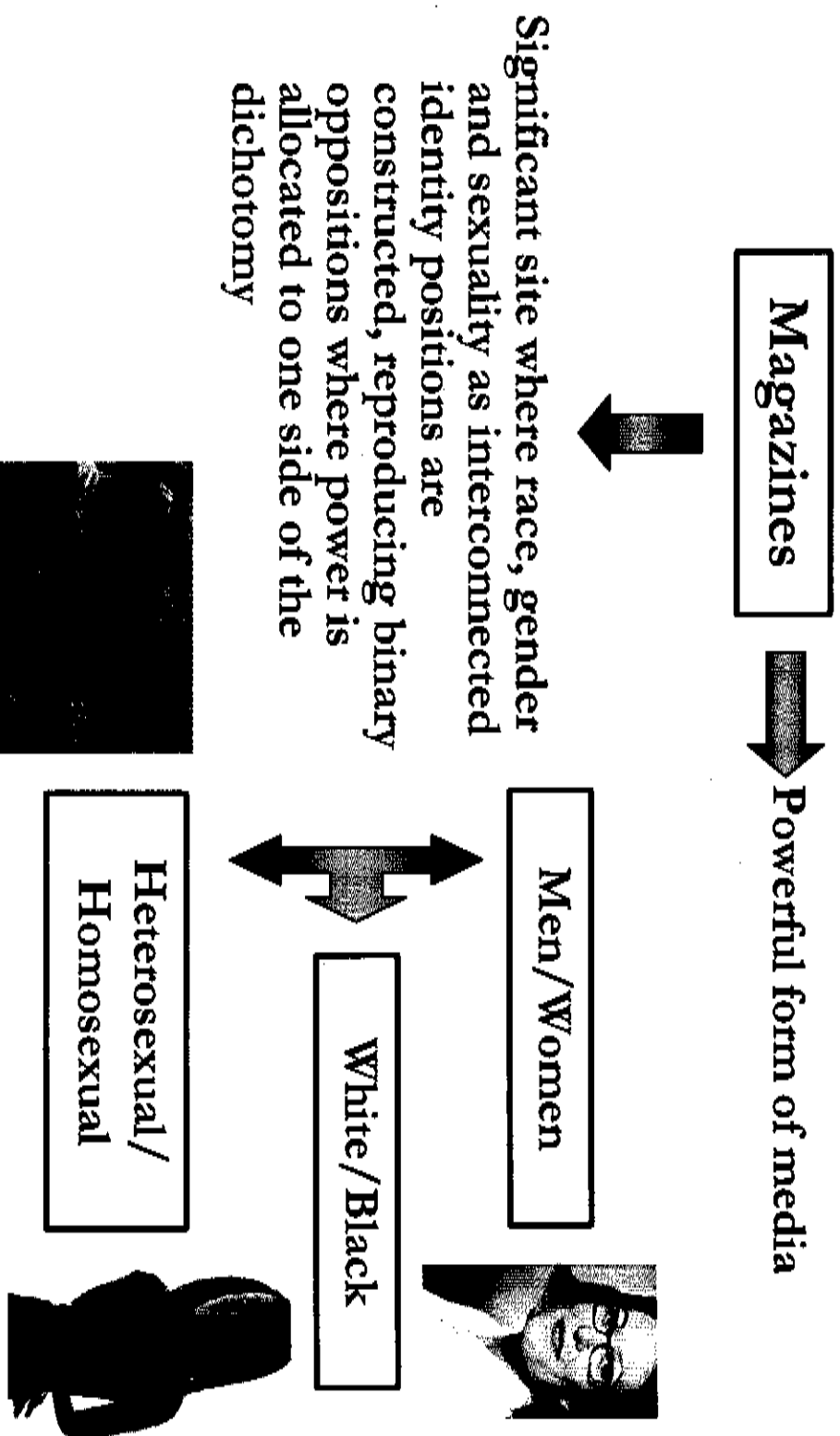
Understands identities as fluid
and static



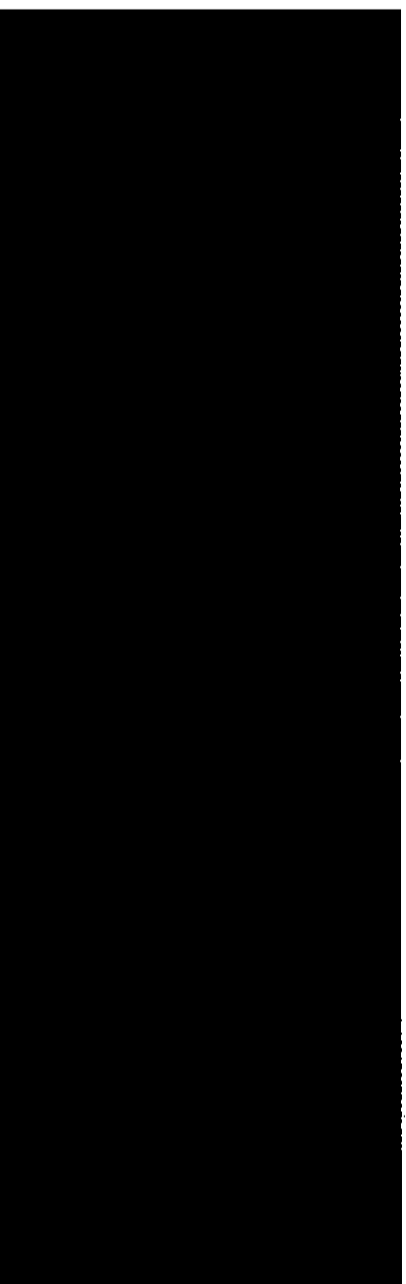
Race, in particular, is
understood as a complicated
multiplicity of identifications which
are continuously being reproduced
and transformed within the
changing socio-political climate in
South Africa



Methodology



Method



Through looking at images, letters' pages and educational articles in magazines aimed at male and female readerships, whiteness as a changing, fluid, mobile identity construction is only attributed meaning through contexts where other identity markers are interdependently located



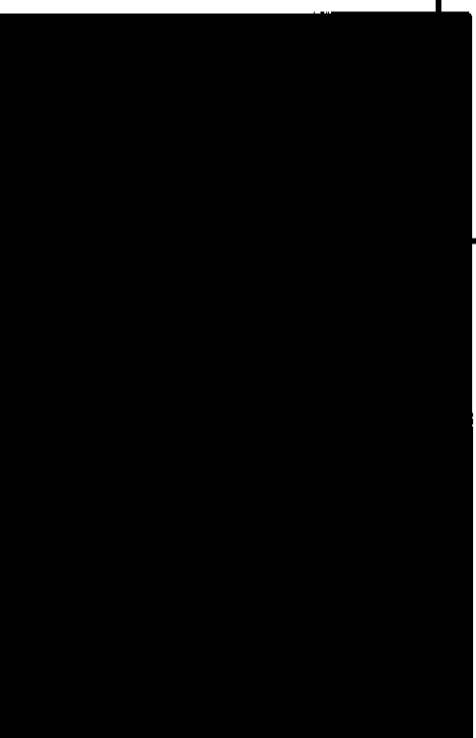
Preliminary Findings

- **South African magazines are only one but powerful site of socialization where notions of whiteness are normalized, maintained and reproduced by the media.**
- **Discourses around whiteness in South African magazines sheds light on more 'popular' daily forms of racialised discourse serving to normalise whiteness**



Preliminary Findings: race, gender and sexuality

Magazines as a powerful form of media, is a significant site where race, gender and sexuality as interconnected identity positions are constructed, reproducing binary oppositions of men/women; white/black; heterosexual/homosexual where power is allocated to one side of the dichotomy.



Preliminary Findings: race and gender

Representation of
black women and
men in magazines



Constructed in
racialised terms

Representation of
white women and
men in magazines



Simultaneously constructed
as 'normal' and deracialised

Magazines aimed at female readerships

in particular, link nationalist and
reconciliatory discourses to black
women, while representing white
women as individuals, 'unraced',
'normal' and unmarked by South
Africa's racialised history



Preliminary Findings: femininity and race

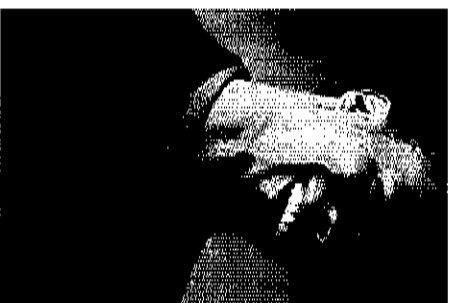
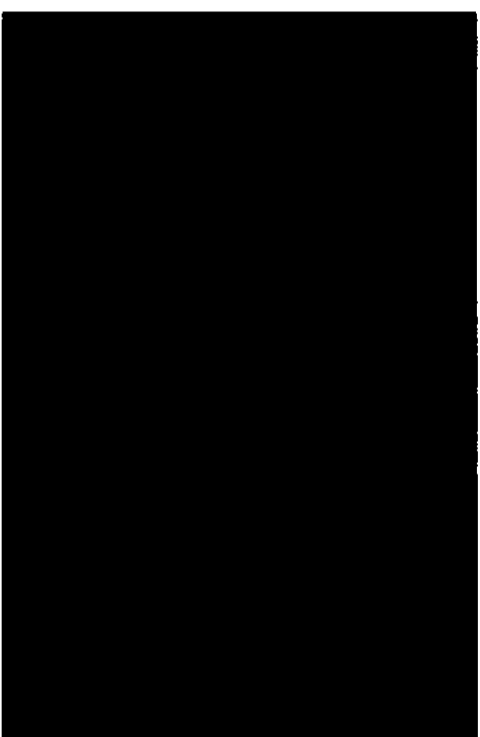
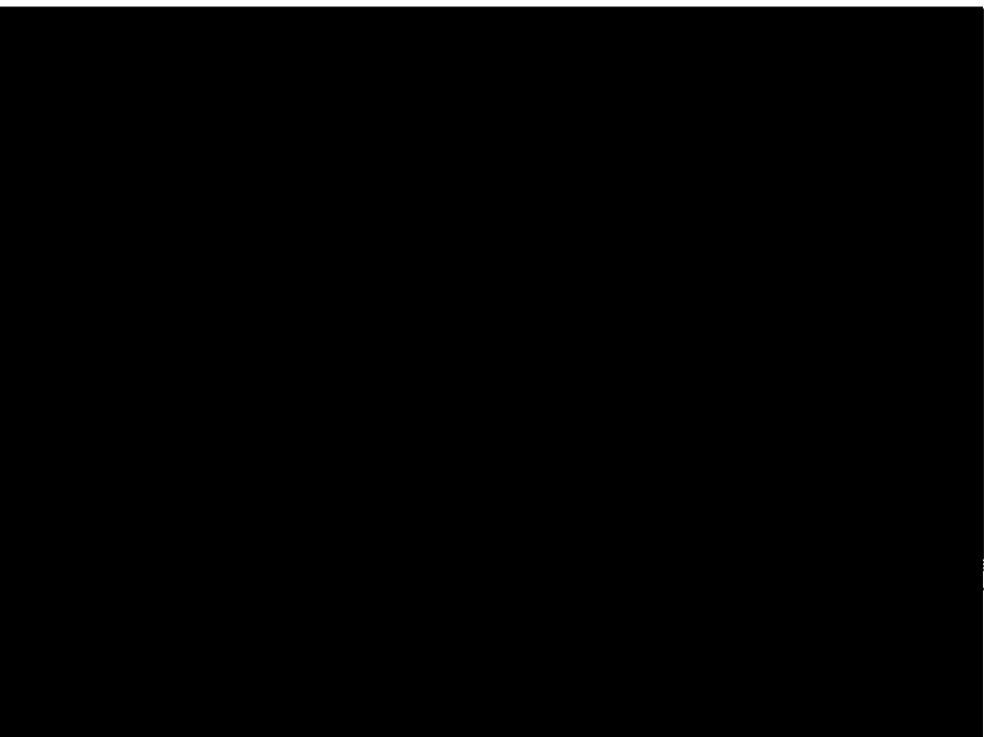
Despite new constructions of 'black beauty', black women are encouraged to aspire to Western notions of beauty which continue to pervade magazine discourse



While women are encouraged to embark on careers, magazines maintain and reproduce constructions of femininities as primarily heterosexual and inherently child and family oriented.



Preliminary findings: masculinity and race



Conclusion

Despite the contradictory messages which South African magazines deliver to their readerships, dominant discourses around race, gender and sexuality continue to be produced, reproduced and maintained in the magazines apparent effort to exercise democracy



The magazine
Some men by

OCTOBER 2003

\$2.95

Men's Health

> WARNING! ADULTS ONLY
SEX TRICKS FROM
PORN FLICKS

The BEST FOOD
a man can eat

GET BACK

LEAN AND MEAN IN 4 WEEKS

PERFECT HEALTH

- > Lose weight!
- > Feel great!
- > Live to 108!

12 Sports that beat stress

100% FREE
9 MONTHS FREE

LAWYERS

Survive anything, p.214

HOW TO...
Make an impression
Get the girl
Plus a V



TRUE LIFE

ALL A WOMAN NEEDS

Rosie Motene

on boyfriends, headache, leaving 'Generations' and her international movie break

Longing

for a child
One woman's painful story of childlessness

Sex

Helping him rise to the occasion

Leg lengthening

Chinese girls risk all for a few extra inches

Win

A Sealy Posturepedic, Chrysalis linen, Kells CDs and other great prizes in our bridal competition worth

R1.5 million

March 2004 No. 93
R1.5 million! Not to mention!
Free! or otherwise at www.etrue.com



Extra TRUE VALUE

TV section

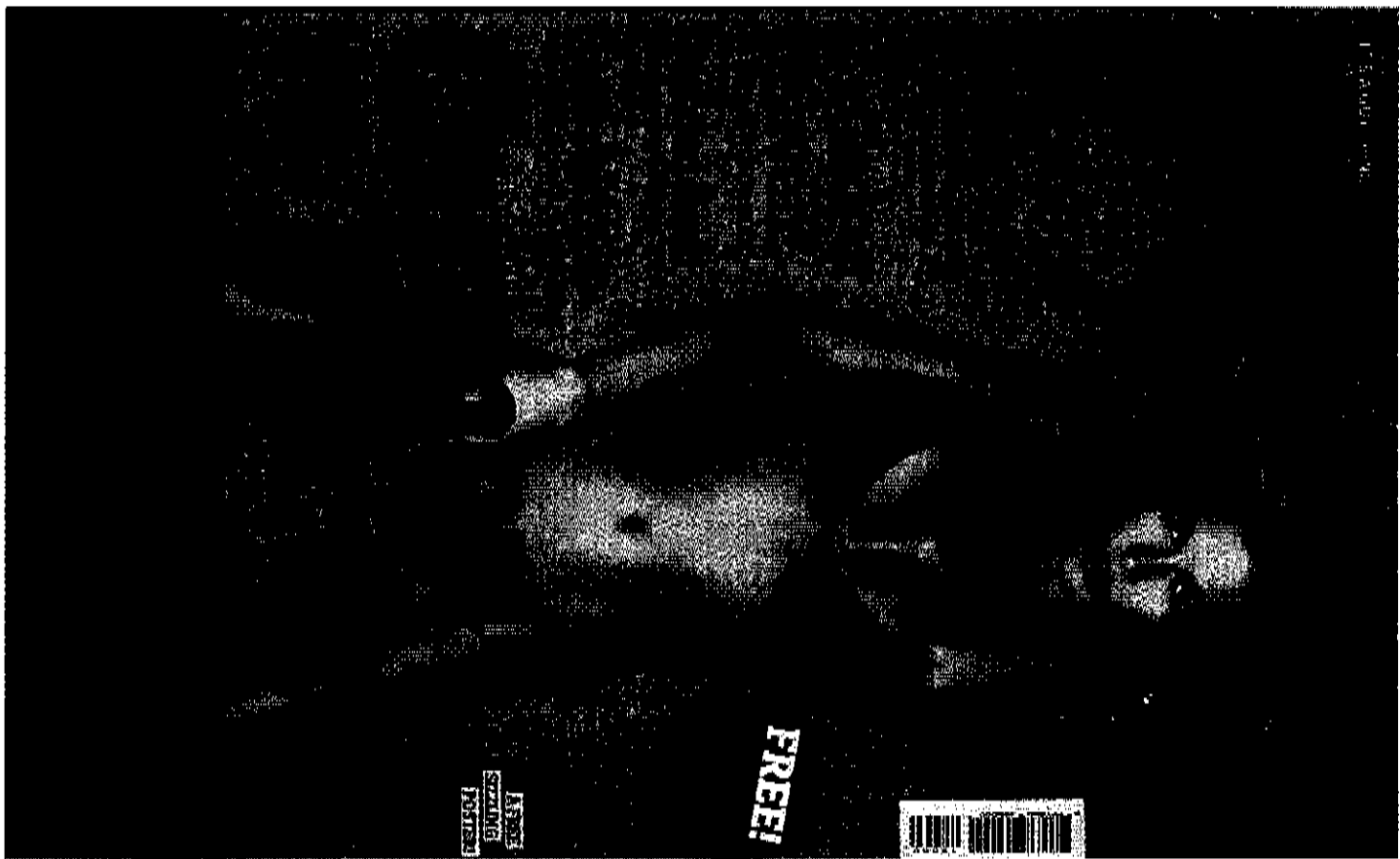
Whatever happened to the brilliant Lauryn Hill?

Zimbabwe's youth militia
An undercover report on terror, rape and looting

15 businesslike steps to finding a husband

How to be 100% in love with life
Truth about why men don't phone

1-800-4-A-BOOK



1-800-4-A-BOOK
SPECIALS
POSTERS

FREE!



SA'S SEXIEST CITIES - GO THERE, p122

WASTELAND

OFF FROM
TOILETS
& WEE

RELAX INSTANTLY
21 Stress Busters

THE ONE HEALTH RISK
YOU NEED TO BEAT

365 AMAZING NEW HEALTH
FITNESS & NUTRITION

MAXIMUM HEALTH BENEFIT



THIS GIRL
WANTS YOU
TAKE HER HOME, p34

Surf a longboard... Mix a cocktail... Sting like Ah!

The magazine
that lives by

MARCH 2005

\$28.95

MEN'S Health

VOTED SAY'S BEST
MEN'S MAGAZINE
5TH YEAR RUNNING

EAT MORE! WEIGHLESS!

18 FOODS THAT FIGHT FAT

33 AMAZING NEW SEX TRICKS

TRY NO. 7 TONIGHT

BOOST YOUR BRAIN POWER, p71

CREATINE



Think yourself thin, ride an ostrich, blow her mind again and again!

