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Interrogating Kim: Making Sense of the Racial “Other” On the Real Housewives of Atlanta

Abstract

The present study examines the role Kim, the lone white cast member, plays on Bravo’s *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* (RHOA). Weaving together insights from focus groups, online viewer comments, popular critiques, and my own critical reading of the show, the paper aims to address the following: How does whiteness factor into negotiations of black upper-middle classness, as related to the storylines and cast of RHOA? Ultimately, I argue RHOA reinforces hegemonic discourses about whiteness – as superior to blackness and equivalent to middle classness – through strategically rendering Kim’s own whiteness visible or invisible in relation to certain themes and events on the show. Readings of the black housewives, especially of their standing among the elite, are positioned against an unstated frame of whiteness – one Kim (fleetingly) embodies. Resulting are frequently negative characterizations of the black women in light of a normative, but hidden emphasis on reaffirming the whiteness of the American upper-middle-class standard.